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PRINTED FOR ROBERT CADELL, EDINBURGH;
AND WHITTAKER, TREACHER, AND ARNOT,
LONDON.

1830.

THE SEA-KINGS

IN

ENGLAND,

AN HISTORICAL ROMANCE.

ERRATA.

Vol. I. p. 119, line 18, *for* permit *read* prevent.

Vol. II. p. 187, line 16, *for* who *read* whom.

Ragnar Lodbrog, whom, after a desperate and unequal combat, he had taken prisoner, determined to glut his vengeance by inflicting upon him a painful and horrible death. The heart shrinks at the details of cruelty which, in those barbarous times, were too frequently perpetrated by the fierce conqueror of either party; but

* Note A.

* The words here erased, were substituted for those which are restored, without consulting me, & after the corrected revise had been returned by me to the printer.

E. B.

THE SEA-KINGS

IN

ENGLAND,

AN HISTORICAL ROMANCE.

INTRODUCTION.

It was in evil hour, for himself and for England, that Ella, king of Northumbria, having by chance of war in his power the fierce Sea-king,* Ragnar Lodbrog, whom, after a desperate and unequal combat, he had taken prisoner, determined to glut his vengeance by inflicting upon him a painful and horrible death. The heart shrinks at the details of cruelty which, in those barbarous times, were too frequently perpetrated by the fierce conqueror of either party; but

* Note A.

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E. L.

often, while our indignation is yet burning against him for his atrocities, we are called upon to pity him for his sufferings, as, in his turn, he groans beneath some equally vindictive and merciless victor.

Ragnar Lodbrog, the most terrible and resistless of the fierce and unresting pirates of the north,—to whom life had no employment and no delight save those of war and plunder,—Ragnar, the scourge of Germany, of England, of France, and of Spain,—he whose spear,—to use his own words in his Quida, or death-song,—had "fifty-and-one times announced the distant enterprise," was at length doomed to taste of the bitter cup from which he had compelled so many to drink. Disregarding the entreaties of his wife, Aslauga, he had built two ships, of a bulk such as had never before been seen, and with these he set forth to plunder upon the eastern coasts of Scotland and of England. But the success of the northern pirates had hitherto mainly depended upon the celerity of their movements: with the light vessels till then in use, they could rapidly effect a landing wherever occasion invited,—and,

if opposed by greater force, could as rapidly re-embark and escape. The cumbrous ships in which Ragnar now sailed,—unfitted for the difficult navigation of the English coasts,—were soon wrecked: and he had no alternative but to submit, or to dare every peril. He chose the latter, and fearlessly confronted Ella, who, with a force vastly superior, came speedily against him. Four times he burst through the ranks of his enemy: but, one by one, every soldier fell by his side, and he was at length struck down and taken prisoner. Glorying in his victory over the dreaded Sea-king, and little foreseeing the direful consequences to himself, and to all England, from the detestable act, Ella commanded* his captive to be thrown into a loathsome dungeon, there to perish miserably among serpents. Even in that horrid place the indomitable heart of Ragnar did not fail him. Laughing at pain, and exulting in his long life of glory, he continued to his last breath singing aloud the triumphs of his arm, and hoping soon to commence his eternal banquet in the Hall of Valhalla.*

* Note B.

But the day of vengeance was not far distant. No sooner had the sons of Ragnar heard of his death, than, laying to rest all animosities among themselves, they combined together, and devoted all their hearts, and all their resources, to the one object of inflicting a swift and terrible retribution. The fame of Ragnar Lodbrog had long been the boast of the north; and every aspirant after glory had made him the theme of song, and the model for imitation. Wherever the sons of the fallen Sea-king took the report of his death, they found warriors eager to avenge it. Norwegians, Danes, Swedes, Jutes, Russians, arose in arms, and gathered their strength for the blow, before any of the Anglo-Saxon kings had heard that hostility was threatened. Eight kings, and twenty earls, the children, the relations, and the companions of Ragnar, sailed from the Baltic with a force such as the winds had never before wafted from the "peopled north." Ella was conquered at York, and perished by a death yet more hideous than that which he had inflicted upon Ragnar.

But revenge upon Ella was not the sole object

of the invasion. A wide spreading vengeance was intended upon the nation; and conquest was now to be, not for plunder merely, as in former attacks, but for the permanent subjugation and occupation of the country. Having arranged their plans, they divided their forces,—each of the three sons of Ragnar taking with him his allotted bands. One army, under the command of Ingwar, or Ivar, passed the Humber into Mercia, and seized upon Nottingham. Burrhed, the king of Mercia, sent to entreat succour from West Saxony; and Ethelred, taking with him Alfred, then nineteen years of age, went promptly to his assistance; and,—though he could not break through the fortifications within which the Danes had secured themselves,—succeeded in procuring a hollow peace, on condition that the enemy should quit Nottingham and retire to York.

These poor attempts to evade the evils that ought to have been strenuously and unceasingly combated by the united strength of the whole country, produced ever the most disastrous consequences. While a Danish standard remained in the island, the sword of its people should ne-

ver have been sheathed. But the Anglo-Saxon kings were jealous of each other, and too often saw with indifference, if not with pleasure, the disasters of a rival, even before him who was equally the enemy of them all.

The Northmen retired to York with a great booty; and the king of West Saxony returned home, not expecting that his own dominions would soon have to feel the scourge from which he had, for a very brief time, rescued Mercia.

In the ensuing spring, the Danes, disregarding treaties which it was no longer their interest or their pleasure to observe, spread like a fire upon the land, and perpetrated ravages the most cruel and destructive. At this period it is that we date the commencement of our story.

CHAPTER I.

It was in the month of September 870, and on the morning of the second day after the feast of St Maurice, that the monks of Croyland Monastery were, with cheerful voices, performing the matin service. There were but few of the society present, for upwards of two hundred of the most vigorous, under the command of Tollius,—himself a monk of the fraternity, but in years gone by a distinguished military leader,—had, a few days before, marched to oppose the Northern hordes, who were cruelly ravaging the country. The hearts of the venerable abbot, and of the community with him, were filled with joyful hope; for, on the morning before, they had received intelligence that the Earl Algar, who commanded the Saxon army, had gained a decisive victory over a considerable body of the

Northmen, and had driven them at night to their intrenchments, with the loss of three of their Sea-kings. Those who remained in the monastery were chiefly aged men and children,*—but their confidence was in God; and they trusted that he would deliver them from the hand of the strong and merciless invader. Cheerfully then they sang; and the voice of the solemn organ rolled its thunders through the vaulted pile.† But a vehement knocking at the great gate disturbed them; and the song of praise suddenly ceased. For a moment no one stirred, though the blows upon the oaken portal were incessant and increasing. All looked upon the grey-haired abbot, and expected his command. The heart of the old man beat with unusual violence; and, for an instant, he stood irresolute what to do. "Was another victory obtained over the pagan destroyer? and did the messengers of the glad tidings, in the ardour of their joy, forget the reverence due to the place and the solemn worship? or were the tidings evil that so strangely disturb-

* Children were sent to the monasteries for protection and education.

† Note C.

ed the bringer ?—or was, indeed, the enemy himself at the gate ?"

Such were the thoughts that in an instant glanced through the mind of the astonished abbot : but as instantly he felt that, good or evil, the tidings must be heard, and themselves must abide the event. Collecting then his spirits, and assuming a look and tone of apparent calmness, he said to those around him, " Fear not, my brethren, nor let your hearts be sunk within you. Haply the tidings may be good ; and our fears may be turned into rejoicing : but, if they be evil, let us not forget that we are the servants of Him who knoweth best that which it is good for us to do or to suffer. Undo the gate, therefore, and let us know the worst."

While he spake, the strokes upon the door were incessantly repeated, and voices were heard without, exclaiming, " Open the gate ! open the gate, or ye are all dead men !"

Two aged porters now moved tremblingly to the door, and drew up the massive iron bars which secured it. They had no sooner done this, than three youths, with terror in their looks, —panting for breath, bathed in sweat, and cover-

ed with blood and dust,—rushed into the chapel. They were clad in light armour; and their whole appearance bespoke that they had come from some desperate conflict. In an instant they were recognized as three of the younger monks who, a few days before, had gone forth with Tollius against the invaders; but, at the first glance, all knew that their tidings were disastrous. With rapid step they went up the echoing aisle; and, as they approached the abbot and the monks, who stood near the altar, the foremost of the three, Osbald of Bardeney, cried out:

"The enemy is at hand! Holy father we must flee swiftly, or perish! The valiant Earl has fallen! Tollius, Morcard, Osgot, the brave sheriff of Lincoln, Leofric, and Wibert, have perished! Every man that was with them, save us alone, hath fallen: and we have fled all night to warn you of the danger. Stand not amazed, holy father, and brethren! Take what you can of value, and leave this place; for assuredly, ere the fourth hour, the destroyer will be upon you!"

Osbald paused a moment for breath; and his companion, Bernred, instantly pursued; "For the love of Christ, holy father, speed you now,

speed you! There is no hope but in flight; for there is not one man left to oppose the horrid crew, save us alone!"

The aged abbot stood for a moment speechless; then turned to the monks and said, "My children! the evil hour is coming upon us; and the issue is known to God only. If He will yet deliver us, or if this day the crown of martyrdom shall be placed upon our heads, the wisdom of man cannot foresee. But we are in the hands of God; and that which He willeth for us is best. Not the less, my children, may we justly strive to escape from the clutches of this fearful and accursed enemy: and to save from pollution and from spoil the costly vessels which have been hallowed to the service of the Lord. Bestir ye then, my children, ye that have strength and youth,—take ye your charters, your holy relics, and your jewels,—get ye into your boats, and flee to the marshes, and the hiding-places; and there remain till this tempest hath passed by. Fling ye also your household goods into the waters, that they may lie unseen; so, haply, if ye return hither, they may again be found, and

made fit for your use. But delay not, nor let your strength fail ye."

At these words, every monk, with the exception of about thirty aged and feeble men, set instantly and strenuously to the work. The children also, animated by a boy ten years of age, of remarkable beauty, and ever the foremost in their childish sports and enterprises, exerted themselves to the utmost of their strength in the removal of such lighter things as were entrusted to them.

The abbot, meantime, with the aged monks, having hastily withdrawn to the refectory, took his seat amid the brethren, and motioned to the three young soldiers to be seated also upon a bench before them.

"Ye are worn down, my sons," he said, "with fatigue and watching; and your limbs fail ye that ye cannot toil with the brethren. Ye are hungered also, and parched with thirst,—and, if ye take not food and drink, how shall ye have strength to escape. Brother Kenwulf,—" he continued, addressing an aged monk, who had formerly held the office of kitchener,—"make

speed, and set before the youths food and drink, —the wheaten loaf, and the flesh meat, although the day be a fast of the church,—and horns filled with the odoriferous pigment. Meantime, do thou Osbald,—for thou art more fluent of speech than these,—tell unto me, and my brethren, how this thing hath befallen. Holy Lord God! Thou givest, and Thou takest away; blessed ever more be thy name!"

While he spake the concluding words, the old man folded his arms on his breast, and reverentially bowed till his long white hair fell, and shadowed his face. Rising then, and with both hands putting back the thin locks, he anxiously awaited the reply.

Osbald, having taken the helmet from his head while the abbot spoke, and passed the skirt of his cloak over his flaming brow, proceeded immediately, but with the tone of one wholly exhausted, to recount the disaster of the preceding day.

"It is grievous to us, holy father, that we cannot, for very weariness, lend our aid to the work of the brethren: but, of a truth, we have

fought for two days past, and all the night we have journied; so that much weariness is upon us: let us then stand excused that, for a little while, we rest from labour."

"Ye *are* excused, my son," replied the Abbot; "waste no words upon this, but tell us briefly how so great an evil hath come upon us."

"Send then first, holy father," said Osbald, "some trusty brother to the western turret, that he may look forth, and give us warning when the enemy is beheld; for his coming on is swift as the spring of the wild beast; and if he be not shunned while yet far off, thou, holy father, and these our brethren, who are feeble and slow of foot, may not be able to escape."

The abbot answered him by a smile, and an upward glance of the eye, that bespoke a resolution already formed, and not to be broken: then, turning to two of the least feeble monks, he bade them climb the steps of the western turret, and bring them word when they beheld the enemy approaching. Osbald then, having hastily swallowed a horn-full of the fragrant wine

which the monk had presented to him, went on as follows :—

" Ye have heard, holy father, and brethren, how, on the feast of St Maurice, we attacked the advanced bands of the accursed invaders, and drove them at night to the gates of their intrenchments, with the loss of three of their Sea-kings. Ah ! much do I fear me that our hearts then waxed proud, and that we trusted too much in the strength and valour of our own arms, not giving to God all the glory ! But, be that as it may, the bravest and the strongest had short time to boast. We had returned to our intrenchments, and betaken us to rest, hoping that the new day would bring to us new glory. Our little band of monks, under the guidance of the pious and heroic Tollius, had distinguished themselves so much as to call forth the peculiar applause of the brave Earl Algar ; —and truly, holy father, if to offer up life for our country with a devoted heart may be deemed a worthy sacrifice in the eye of God,—of a surety they are now receiving in Heaven their rich reward. Stronger arms there were in

the field, and soldiers better trained to the discipline of battle,—but hearts more undaunted, and martyrs more willing to render up life in the cause of Christ against the demoniac pagan, never stood with foot to foe. Their blood hath steamed to Heaven, and will bring down its wrath upon their murderers! Forgive me, holy father, that these tears fall at the recollection of their heroic devotion, and their early fate: but they were my brethren at the altar, and in the fearful hour of battle,—and my heart is not yet steeled to look on the death of such with indifference."

"I honour thy feelings, my son," said the abbot, wiping the tears from his hoary cheek,—"nevertheless, we ourselves haply deserve more to be pitied, who remain to witness the crimes and the sufferings from which those our brethren are now released. Go on, my son, lest the time serve us not to hear the tale of sorrow."

"We had retired to rest,"—resumed Osbald,—"and our little band were stationed near to those of the Earl, in honour of their feats in the day. I myself, having, however undeservedly,

met with the especial notice of our pious chief, had been honoured with a couch next to his own, that, if aught chanced requiring it, I might be instantly at his call. The watchers were at their posts: I had once heard their cheering signal that all was well, and then fallen into a deep sleep. But not long had I slept when a hand upon my shoulder, and a voice in my ear, aroused me; and, half-stupified, I saw, by the dim light of the watch-fire, that the brave Tollius knelt by my side. 'Arise, Osbald,' said he, but in a suppressed tone, as fearing to awaken those near us,—'Arise instantly, and tell me what sounds are those in the direction of the enemy's camp: surely it seems like the coming on of a host, and I fear me that strong succours may be hasting to the foe: tell me, nevertheless, thy thoughts before I arouse the Earl, for sorry indeed should I be to disturb, upon slight cause, the slumbers of our wearied men.'

"I started up, and listened breathlessly: but my head whirled, and my heart beat so loud with the suddenness of the surprize, that for a time I could hear nothing. He, however, cooler than

I, still caught the sounds, and in another direction also, as if of two distinct bodies of men in quick motion. While we stood thus listening, a watchman from the outposts came hastily toward the tent of the Earl. We met him, and Tollius enquired his errand. 'There is a noise as of the tread of armed men marching from the north and from the west,' he replied,—'and we thought it best that the Earl should know it.'

"Tollius instantly entered the tent of the chief, and communicated to him the intelligence. Wrapped in his cloak, the majestic Earl came forth, and listened to the sounds, which were now distinct, and every instant increasing. 'Call up the lord of Brunne, and the sheriff of Lincoln, and Harding of Rehale,' said the Earl,—'the enemy is gathering in force, and we must take counsel together. Bid them hither instantly, and let the soldiers be awaked that they may arm themselves before the enemy is upon us.'

"He had scarcely finished when a loud shout from the camp of the Northmen came to our ears, and we plainly distinguished the name of

Hubbo. 'Strike on the drum'* cried the Earl, —'get on your armour: we shall have hot work before the morning if that pestilence is coming against us. What, ho! awake! awake!'

"Having cried out thus, the Earl rapidly retired to his tent to put on his armour. In a moment our army was stirring, and, for a while, their hearts were cheerful. The chiefs were soon in council within the tent of the Earl, and the soldiers were armed and awaiting the end, resolved to conquer or to fall for their country, and for the cause of Christ. Our little band of monks, standing together with uncovered heads, sang the joyful hymn, 'Our trust shall be in the Lord,' and all the soldiers joined their voices to the glad Amen; and it seemed as if one heart ruled us. But again a shout arose from the pagan host, and the name of Sidroc was heard from unnumbered savage voices. Fear then came upon many among us, and the soldiers stood here and there in low talk together; but,

* The drum is a tense leather, stretched on two cones (metas) joined together by their acute part, which resounds on being struck.—*Bede, Op.* Vol. 8th, p. 1061.

as yet, none spake openly of retreat, and no man went from among us. The valiant Earl, and Tollius, and the other leaders, now came from the tent, and walked among the ranks, and spake words of encouragement to all. But when, after a while, new and yet more terrible shoutings came from the Northmen,—and the dreaded name of Ingwar was heard, and the clashing of arms,—then some of the soldiers cried out, 'Fly! fly! or we shall perish every man!'—and, themselves setting the example, instantly fled from the camp. In vain did the valiant Algar, and Tollius, and the Lord of Brunne, strive to recal them. The panic spread, and, of our small army, nearly the half abandoned us and fled in the night."

"Cowards!" cried the aged abbot, striking with his weak hand upon the table,—"cowards and traitors! But how then fared ye?"

While Oswald was preparing to reply, some of the monks came in to tell the abbot that a part of the golden-plated table of the great altar, which they had flung into the water, rose above the waves.

"Draw it then forth," said the abbot,—"and

replace it in the chapel: and take special heed, my sons, that nought of those things which ye cast into the water shall be visible to the eye of the spoiler, lest it betray to him the rest, and our labour be vain. I will myself ere long go forth among you, and then shall I see if you have well done your task."

While the abbot was speaking, one of the aged monks, who had been sent to keep watch on the western turret, returned to tell him that the flames of the villages of Kesteven, (one of the three districts into which Lincolnshire was anciently divided,) were visible for miles around; and that, even while they had looked upon them, two others, at no great distance, had burst forth: but that, as yet, no army was seen approaching, though their shouts and yells were distinctly audible.

"Nay, then,"—cried the abbot, "we must not longer tarry. Come with me, some of you, my brethren, that we may bear away the holy vessels, and the crucifix of fine gold, from the altar. Nay, stir not thou, my son," addressing Osbald, who, with evident pain, was rising to

follow him,—" Stir not thou; hands enough for labour like this are among us. Sit and refresh thyself, thou and thy companions, with food and with wine, till I return; and afterward, if the time will serve, shalt thou finish the story of this woful event."

So speaking, the old man arose; and, attended by a few of the monks, with slow and feeble steps quitted the apartment. When, after a little while, he returned, wearied with his slight, but unwonted, labour, and had resumed his seat, " Now, my son," he said, " proceed with what briefness thou mayest: our boat hath put off with the relics, the charters, and the costly jewels, to the wood of Ancarig, on the south of the island; and many of our younger monks have betaken themselves to the marshes, whither the enemy, for ignorance of the swamps, will not dare to pursue them. Ye, also, my children, when the boat shall return, must embark, or surely would ye perish, when these accursed men come upon us. Make speed then, Osbald, that we may hear thy tale."

" We are now refreshed, with meat and with

wine, holy father," replied Osbald, " and our service might perhaps not be useless to you: nevertheless, I will yet stay to obey your commands, and with all briefness conclude my tragical story."

As Osbald pronounced this, his two companions, arising, bowed to the abbot, and the aged monks, and desired leave to go forth that they might see if they could in any way render assistance to their brethren without. The abbot gave his sanction; and Osbald immediately went on thus:

" But for this unhappy falling off of nearly half our strength, we might still, holy father, have preserved our intrenchments, and resisted the advance of the enemy. Our small band waited all night under arms, expecting the assault. But it was not till the enemy had buried, with solemn pomp, the three kings who on the day before had fallen, that they came against us. We did not fear them: the dross had purged itself from us: every feeble heart that had been among us was now gone,—and the noble few that remained were resolute to trust in God, and

to stand till the last man against the remorseless enemy. The Northman is brave, holy father, though cruel and treacherous: his foot is swift as the deer; and the stroke of his weapon is terrible: but, impatient of command, and unordered in discipline of war, they could not have prevailed in the battle against us, had not our numbers been so few,—and had not our own blind impetuosity led us on to destruction. The brave and wise Algar had so skilfully arranged us in the battle, that all the day the disorderly assaults of the foe had not broken our ranks. They had expended their darts; and their horsemen were wearied out with ineffectual labour. But the crafty enemy saw, at length, where the secret of our strength lay. They despaired of breaking our phalanx of shields and of spears by their ill-planned attacks,—but they knew that, if they could disorder our array, their greater numbers must give them the victory. Suddenly, then, they set up the cry of flight, and withdrew as if vanquished. Alas! for our valiant, but unguided, men! They saw flight,—and they hastened to snatch victory. In vain did our wiser

leaders adjure them to remain in their ranks; in vain did they proclaim to them that ruin would overwhelm them! Intoxicated with ardour, and burning with thirst of conquest, the soldiers rushed on. The Northmen saw their hope accomplished. With wild yells they turned to the attack; and our soldiers fell before them! I also, foolish as the rest, had sprung forward; but the voice of Tollius reached me, and I returned to his side. He, with the Earl, and four other chiefs, stood resolved to fall on the field: but, while a cloud of the fierce warriors was about to sweep over us, he charged me in the most holy name of Christ instantly to flee, and bring to you the tidings of the day, lest ye might have no time to escape. His look was as that of some being greater than man, and his voice had an energy that I could not resist. Our brother Cynewulf, who was at my side, called to me to haste; and himself turned to go with me. We fled together, but I was swifter than he; and when, after awhile, I looked back, he was not with me! I reached a clump of trees on a gentle ascent, and turned my eyes towards the field

where the self-devoting chiefs had stood,—but alas! all had fallen! The yells of victory were sent up by the savage pagans; and I had nought to do but to call upon God for strength, and to hasten upon my way. On the borders of a wood I overtook the two who were my companions hither. We strove to cheer each other as we laboured wearily through the night: and our toil will not have been in vain, if it shall aid you, holy father, and brethren, to escape from the fangs of the wild beast that pursues you."

Osbald paused; and the abbot, and the aged monks, bent their heads upon their breasts, and seemed overwhelmed in sorrow.

"Their blood hath not sunk into the earth in vain!" said at length the hoary prior, "in his good time God will avenge them! But, reverend father," addressing the abbot, who with upraised hands sat in silent prayer, "gird thy loins now, and flee, lest the unbelievers bring upon themselves by our death a deeper damnation."

"Brother Osred," replied the abbot to the prior, "my limbs are too feeble to bear me

hence; and if my hour to die be come, here shall it find me. But, beasts as they are, the enemy will not make slaughter of us, and of the infants who remain with us. The tender child, and the aged man, cannot injure them;—and wherefore then should they wreak their vengeance upon such? Surely would so black a guilt draw fire from heaven upon them, even as upon the accursed cities! No, brother Osred,"—continued he with a firm voice, and a kindling eye, —"for three score years and ten these walls have been my sanctuary, my only world: here, morning, noon, and night, have my prayers and my hymns been poured out to my God and my Saviour;—here did my boyhood blossom into youth,—my youth ripen into manhood,—my manhood wither into age and decrepitude,—and here, finally, will I yield up my spirit into the hand of its Creator. Before that altar, where for thirty years, unworthy as I am, I have ministered the most solemn rites of our holy religion,—even there will I stand and await,—whether it be good, or whether it be evil,—that which shall this day be done unto me. But, if there be

among you, my aged brethren, any that would rather trust to his feeble limbs that life of which so short a term can remain unto him, than to the Almighty and All-wise Power, who giveth life unto all things, and who, in his own time, requireth that life again at their hands,—if there be, my brethren, among you any such,—let him, in the name of Christ, depart. From me shall he have no blame,—nay, my prayers shall go with him: for, of a truth, this breath of life is dear to man, though in poverty, in sickness, and in sorrow; God himself hath made it sweet unto him; and who then shall blame him that he loveth it? Do then, my brethren, every one of you even as each seeth best unto himself. The young, and strong, and swift of foot,—such as may struggle against toil, and difficulty, and danger,—such as may yet, in happier day, stand with stout heart to fight the battles of Christ's church against the pagan destroyer,—them have I charged to get hence, and to seek, where they may, for the safety which here they could not hope to find. The arm that could itself bear the sword, would assuredly fall by the sword;—but for us

—if we flee, we shall perish by the way,—if we abide here, and put our trust in God, haply the hearts of our enemies may be softened towards us, and they may shame to injure our grey hairs."

"But the children—holy father,"—said the prior,—"shall not *they* be borne to some place of safety, if such we can find? Surely their lives will hereafter be required at our hands, if we take not the means to preserve them!"

"Our boat is drawing nigh, brother Osred;" replied the abbot,—"let the elder and stronger of the children be put on board; and again I say it,—if among you, my brethren, there be any who would rather brave toil and danger in seeking escape, than abide here that lot which Providence shall ordain for us, let such embark also, —and God be their speed;—but, for the young children, that have not strength for the way,—let them abide with us; and their tender innocence shall be their strength and their shield."

When the abbot had thus spoken, the prior, with Osbald and a few of the monks, went out to place on board the boat such costly things as yet remained, and as many of the elder children

as they deemed most likely to endure the fatigue and the privations to which they must be subjected during the period of their concealment amid woods and marshes, where, for days, they might hunger, and for long nights make their couch upon the earth.

The abbot meantime, and his aged brethren, sat in discourse, recalling to the memory of each other the glorious men who had joyfully laid down their lives in the service of Christ; and picturing to each other the bliss of that heaven which was ever open to receive the spirits of the martyred righteous. They were interrupted by the entrance of one of the monks who had been stationed at the western turret. Urging his feeble limbs to their utmost speed, and striking his iron-pointed walking staff upon the ringing pavement as he strove to quicken his step, he tottered up the long apartment, and, with looks of terror, and a feeble and faltering voice, lifted to the utmost pitch of its strength, cried as he came on, "Away! holy father! away my brethren! away! They come like ravenous wolves,—they pour down toward the morass and

the water,—they glister like serpents as they sweep along. Away! away! they will thread the swamp, they will be upon you ere ye can flee. Speed to the boat, my brethren;—in the name of Christ, up and begone! Wherefore do ye linger?"

Crying out thus, the old man hasted toward his aged brethren, who sat unmoved, and silent. As he concluded, he stood among them, and gazed wildly in their faces.

"Brother Wihtred,"—said the abbot to him,—"we have taken up our lot here; and, by the blessing of God, here will we unfearingly await the end. But if thou, brother, wilt rather trust for safety to thy weak limbs in the woods and the desert morasses, than share with us in weal and in woe,—we pray thee not to tarry: speed thee to the cove where the boat waiteth, and will bear thee away. But from what quarter cometh the enemy, brother! for, if they have espied the bark, then assuredly——"

"From the north, from the north"—cried the terrified old man;—"they cannot have beheld the blessed boat:—get ye away! get ye away!

—I cannot stay among you !—I cannot die ! I cannot die !"

So saying, the old man hasted from them to escape to the boat: but, before he could reach the door, fell heavily upon the pavement. When the monks hasted to raise him, they saw that he was dead.

At this moment the prior entered, holding by the arm the boy whom we have before-mentioned as the first to incite his fellows to give their little aid towards the removal of the lighter articles which the monks were transporting to the boat. The face of the boy was glistening with tears, but his whole expression was that of enthusiastic devotedness and resolution.

" Holy father"—cried the prior, when he had approached the abbot,—" lay your commands upon this headstrong child, who scorns my words, and whose strength I cannot overcome. The boat is prepared, and waits for him alone. Of all that have embarked, none so likely to do well as he,—yet will he not go with them. Command him, holy father,—for thou knowest his life may

one day be precious;—do *thou* command him, and he dare not disobey."

"Edmund, my child,"—said the hoary abbot, while the tears came to his eyes,—"haste thee away, while yet there is time; thou art strong and active, and mayst escape, and live to be a blessing to many: but, if thou abidest with us, the cruel Northmen will put thee instantly to death."

"They have slain my father Cynewulf"—said the boy, bursting again into tears,—"they killed him yesterday,—Osbald has told me:—they will kill you too,—and all my little playfellows,—I will not go into the boat and leave them,—I will stay and tell those wicked men how God will punish them,—I will tell them of hell and judgment,——"

"Hush! hush! my dear boy"—said the abbot, interrupting him, and gently pushing him to be gone,—"obey the command which may perhaps be my last. Run to the boat,—this delay may cost the lives of all these, should the Northmen see it,—and may cause the death of many that are already landed, if they should pursue."

The abbot was here interrupted by the voice of the other monk who had been left on the turret to keep watch,—and who hastened, in great alarm, to say, that the enemy had brought several boats round the northern point of land, and were pushing forward to the island.

"Edmund!"—said the abbot,—"thy obstinacy may have been fatal to thy companions, if their boat cannot turn the southern headland before the enemy comes up! Fly instantly, or their blood be upon thy head!"

The energy of the old man's voice and look alarmed and overpowered the boy, who, suddenly turning pale as death, rushed out at the door.

"Come with me now, my brethren,"—said the venerable abbot,—"come with me; and let us stand before the altar, and lift up our voices to God. Bring also the tender infants, that they may join with us in prayer and in praise to Him who died for the redemption of us all."

As he spoke, he looked around with a smiling face; then, taking the arm of the prior, walked toward the chapel. He had not proceeded many steps when he turned to the monks who fol-

lowed him, and said, " Look forth at the postern door, some of you, my brethren,—and see if the boat has put off;—surely they will escape the eye of the enemy, else evil will it be to them and to us!"

Two or three of the hoary monks, in prompt obedience, moved toward the door, but paused as they beheld Edmund enter.

" They are gone," said the boy, his beautiful countenance filled with gladness,—" they are gone,—and I have not brought harm upon them. Holy father," he continued, as he approached the abbot,—" they were far on their way when I returned to the cove; and our good God will protect them. Let me live with you,—or die, as my father Cynewulf died."

" Poor child!" said the abbot, placing his white and withered hand upon the luxuriant yellow tresses of the boy, who stood looking up to him, " poor child! The blessing of heaven be upon thee! Thou knowest not what thou hast done."

Having said these words, the abbot took the hand of the boy in his, and walked to the cha-

pel. There they found some of the monks, with the young children, already awaiting them. The abbot placed Edmund among them, and solemnly took his place at the altar, surrounded by the venerable fraternity. There was for a time a dead silence among them. Each looked upon the other like men who are about to part for ever. The young children, alarmed, yet not knowing well what it was they had to fear, stood with trembling limbs, and faces pale as marble, looking up at the venerable abbot and the hoary men, whose protection they still thought defence enough against every danger. Edmund alone stood firm among them; but his eyes were turned anxiously to the door.

"Fling wide the gates"—said the abbot, at length, with a solemn tone, "Fling them wide; for our strength is not in resistance, but in our weakness, and in the might of the Lord."

The gates were opened; and the enemy were heard approaching.

"Lift we now our voices unto God!" said the venerable man;—"and let our hosannahs go up to the throne!" With a strength and clear-

ness of tone, such as he had not for years before possessed, he then began a sublime Magnificat, and the brethren and the children joined with him.

But, as they went on, the shouts and the yells of the savage hordes without increased: and, before they had concluded, a howl and a laugh, as of demons, burst upon them; and a torrent of armed men rushed in at the gate.

"Ha—ha!"—shouted the terrible and gigantic Hubbo, bounding like a wild bull toward the now silent, but unmoving brethren;—"Ha ha! Christian priests? A feast for the steel! Hew them to pieces! A sacrifice to Odin! A pleasant offering to the god of battles!"

Brandishing his terrible sword, he flew to the altar where, with the cross uplifted in his hand, the abbot stood calmly awaiting the result.

"Your treasures, priest,—your gold, and silver, and jewels"—roared the pagan, as with uplifted weapon he stood before the hoary father. His eye was fierce and bright as the angry serpent's,—a thick foam stood on his lips,—and his large and savage face looked red as the sun

through a dun vapour. "Your golden chalice, —your incense-pots, old mass-babbler"—he cried —"bring them before us."

"Thou wilt find neither gold, nor silver, nor jewels here, profane man," answered the abbot: "nor are such *our* treasure. In this," said he, lifting the cross,—"and in the blood of Christ, *our* treasure is,—and in yon heaven where thou ———"

"There seek it then!" replied the brutal soldier, breaking upon his words,—and instantly hewed him down. Ere the body reached the floor, the meek spirit had parted from it.

A shriek of horror and fear arose from the monks and the children, and they began to fly in every direction. Edmund alone, filled with rage at the perpetrator, rushed against him, and with the utmost of his childish force struck at him, and caught at his sword belt to drag him back as he was springing forward to cut down the prior. The monster heard the indignant cry of the boy, though he could not feel the blow of his naked hand, or the feeble check at his belt,—and, half turning, whirled round his weapon to hew him

in two;—but Sidroc, the Swede, was close behind him, and with his sword parried the blow, which might else have fallen upon himself.

"Look where you strike," cried he to Hubbo, —"Takest thou me for a priest?"

Hubbo replied with a laugh,—and turned to other work. Edmund, however, still crying out against the murderer, attempted to follow him; and would inevitably have felt the edge of his sword; but Sidroc, laughing at his impotent fury, and interested by his beautiful countenance, caught him in his arms, lightly as the boy would himself have caught up an angry kitten,—and, bidding a soldier beside him follow instantly, leaped down the steps of the altar,—and, avoiding the throng, went out at the western gate.

Edmund, meantime, struggled in his arms; and, with his clenched hands, struck him unceasingly in the face; but the Swede, laughing at his rage, hurried on.

"By my good sword,"—said he, "thou wilt prove a brave fellow, my little monk, shouldst thou live to gird on harness against us. Be quiet,

most valorous mouse,—hold thy hand,—I will not harm thee."

They had by this time cleared the gate; and Sidroc, putting down the boy, gave him to the soldier. "Rolf"—said he to the man,—"get thee to a boat, and make to land with this young Thor.* Bear him safely to the tent of the queen; and beg, in my name, her present protection for him. He shall be my *cniht*† till his arm can strike with heavier weapon than that pulpy fist of which he is so liberal. Mark me! bear him safe, and untouched. If any man harm one hair of his head, the sword and lance shall speak of it. Strip his monkish gear from him, however, as soon as thou mayst; and clothe him fittingly. —There is store enough of garments among the York booty. But I must be gone, or that Odinsee bull, and his brother of Lethra, will gore every man and child before we get from them the secret of their treasure. Away with thee, Rolf,—and,—my little lion,"—addressing Edmund, and kissing his cheek,—"go quietly,—and make no

* Thor. Note E.

† Cniht, a youthful attendant of the better class.

attempt to escape, or thou wilt rue it till the day of thy death,—and that will be the day of thy off-set."

So saying, he turned hastily, and sprang through the door-way. Edmund made no reply. He heard the shrieks, and the howlings, that bespake the horrid work going on in the sacred place; and with the feeling of one who labours under some hideous dream, went unresistingly, with his hand firmly held in that of the soldier.

We shall not follow the Swedish warrior to the interior of the monastery. Suffice it to say, that, after vain and cruel attempts to force from the devoted monks a knowledge of their hidden treasures, the ferocious Northmen put to death every man, and every child;—and, having broken open the tombs, and seized such things as they deemed in any way worthy spoil, set fire to the noble edifice, and departed.

CHAPTER II.

The soldier to whom Sidroc had committed the care of Edmund, had not proceeded many paces with him before, turning his head toward the monastery, and perceiving that his chief was out of sight, he stopped to listen to the sounds that issued from the building.

"Pretty music that, my little hero," said he to the boy—"and new to thy ears, I dare say. Ha ha—he's making fine sport there,—that Odinsee bull Hubbo, as my captain, thy very good friend and master, called him but now:—and troth, well he deserves the name.—I would not give a horn of small ale for the lives of the whole brood, when he sings in this tune. But, for the matter of that, his brother, the boar of Lethra, pitches his voice to as loud a key.—By my sword-blade, they make a very choice uplifting of it! Hark!—that's the call of Sidroc,—and he bids

them hold. A gilded helmet now to a rusted lance, that they go to it among themselves. Ha —that's no sword-cut on monk's flesh, but steel falcion on iron buckler. But he knows how to tame you, fair foot to foot, roar as you will old copper-front. Whew!—what squall blows now?"

Just before he uttered the last words, a terrific cry arose from the miserable victims. "For the love of Christ,"—said Edmund, stopping with his disengaged hand one ear, and almost shrieking with agony of distress,—"for the love of Christ, take me away from this place, or kill me at once!"

"Ha ha," replied the soldier, laughing,—"for the love of Christ, say'st thou, my little monk? Troth I should do little to pleasure thee for Christ's sake:—But for thy own, my pretty lamb,—as thou dost not like to hear the baaing of the sheep under the butcher,—and also for my captain's sake, who hath taken a liking to thy blue eyes and golden locks,—and, furthermore, for my own sake, who may fare but ill if thou farest not well, being under my piloting,—I will e'en forward with thee. But stop,"—continued

he, after proceeding a short way, "What hast thou under that wenche's nappery? If thou art seen in this trim, 'tis odds I shall have to draw sword for thee against the first pike that may have nothing better to employ it. Undo thy monk's coat, and let us see what body-fender thou hast beneath."

As he spoke this, the soldier busied himself to remove the long habit which the boy had on, and which was of the kind worn by the children of the monasteries, as well as by the monks, when they attended upon the solemn ceremonies of their religion. The usual coat, fitting close to the body, and reaching below the knee, was visible when the robe was drawn aside; and the soldier failed not to remark that it was framed of such fine materials as bespoke the wearer to belong to the wealthier class. A chain of gold round the neck, sustaining a small cross, rudely shaped from some precious stone, chiefly attracted his attention, and excited his cupidity. "What bauble hast thou here?"—he said to the boy,—attempting at the same time to remove it from his neck,—"I must

not leave this trinket about thee, or thou wilt likely have rough hands at thy dainty throat."

Edmund, however, resisting as well as he could, implored him not to take it from him. "It was the gift of my father Cynewulf," he cried,—"and he is dead,—and I shall want it to pray to, and to comfort me.—Do not,—oh, do not take it from me."

"Tush, child!" replied the man, forcibly removing it—and hasting forward—"Thou shalt have it again: dost think I care for thy baby toy?—Some nurse's market-day present, I suppose, bought with a copper-piece, or a dozen of eggs.—Peace with thy puling,—would'st thou have thy neck twisted by the first fellow that saw thee, for the sake of tricking thyself off with this trumpery? Thou'dst better keep a quiet tongue, and say nought of it, even to my captain; for other people may not know so well as I do,—now that I have looked well at it,—that it's hardly worth the picking up: and if once they take it in their heads that thou hast aught of cost about thee, credit me thou'lt have queer tickling soon enough,—but not to make thee

laugh. So say no more about it, my little saint; and I'll keep it safe for thee, and give it thee again when thou art a man, and can'st hold thine own with sword and buckler."

The boy, however, was too keen witted not to see through the shallow cunning of the fellow; and, moreover, knew well enough the value of his ornament, and was too much attached to it, for the sake of him whom he supposed to have been the giver, to surrender it passively.

"It is no nurse's market-day present,"—said he,—"and I will not hold my tongue about it,—for, if you don't give it me again, I will complain of you so soon as I see your captain. You are a wicked man, I am sure,—and want to steal it from me, and to frighten me because I am a boy and cannot fight with you."

They had by this time reached the boat; and the soldier, having rather roughly lifted the boy in, and pushed from the bank, thought he might perhaps secure his captive's silence by terrifying him.

"So—I am a wicked man, am I, my fine priestling,—and want to steal your gew-gaw?—

and you will complain of me to my captain?—On my word, you are a mighty and terrible fellow!—And suppose,—most potent Sir,—I should make bold to drop you into this salt-water basin, as we are going gently across, and then make my own complaint to my captain that you had yourself taken the leap,—might I not easily, if I coveted your bit of brass, make sure of it without feeling the scourge of your wrath,—and no one the wiser? You'll complain, will you, my precious milk-skin?"

As he said this, he suddenly caught up the boy, and with one arm lifted him from the boat, and held him over the water. "Swear now to me," young headstrong, by this bit of mummery,"—holding up the cross,—"and I know thou durst not break that oath,—swear to me, by this sparkler, that thy lips shall never breathe, to man, woman, or child, one word touching the bauble,—and I will spare thy life, and be kind to thee: but,—if thou wilt not swear to me,—by the pit of Niflheim! and by the right hand of Odin, I will drop thee into the water, and keep thy trumpery in spite of thee. Take the oath, thou

monk-spawn—take the oath!" So saying, he shook the child with violence, and lowered him till his feet touched the water.

"I will *not* take an oath to thee, thou wicked and cruel man!" said the undaunted boy,—"I will not profane the sacred sign of my redemption,—and thou mayest do thy will upon me, for I do not wish to live when my father, and the holy abbot, and the brethren, and my companions, are killed by such wicked men."

His eyes, while he spake, and his whole countenance, beamed indignation, and bespoke his resolve to meet death rather than submit to the offered alternative.

The soldier was astonished,—and for a moment knew not what to do. He had, in defiance of the peremptory command of his master, a powerful and dreaded Sea-king, laid the hand of violence upon the captive,—and he knew that a stroke of the sword would be the instant reward of his disobedience, should the boy, as he threatened, report his conduct to him. Yet he feared to carry his own threat of drowning the child into execution, because he was aware that a

severe punishment would fall upon him for his neglect of taking proper precaution to preserve him. He was, besides, like every Northman, an expert swimmer; and could have no excuse for not having rescued the boy from the water, even supposing,—which was not probable,—that the story of his having leaped into it, should find belief. The latter course seemed, however, the less dangerous of the two; and he would infallibly have put the captive to death, in pursuance of his threat, had it not occurred to him that, though he could not terrify, he might perhaps coax, or bribe him to secrecy. Under pretence, therefore, that he had been only in jest, he assumed a smile, and a good-humoured tone; and, after kissing him on the cheek, and patting him on his head, replaced him in the boat.

"Thou art a fine little fellow, and a brave," —said he, laying his hand upon the shoulder of the boy,—"and I like thy spirit. Trust me, though, it would be a dangerous kindness for us, if we were to suffer many such stout-hearted whelps as thou to 'scape, and grow up to full-

limbed lions. And so thou thought'st that I was serious with thee—didst thou?"

"Yes I did,"—answered the boy,—"and I think so still,—and I am sure that you are a very wicked man, or you could not have looked as you did, nor shaken me so cruelly."

"And what,"—said the soldier, somewhat altering his tone,—and looking at the same time in every direction, that he might see if they were observed,—"and what then, my youngster, will it be your pleasure to do, since you are so sure of my being such a very wicked person? Will you be revenged upon me by telling this silly tale to Sidroc, in the hope that I may be punished for jesting a little with so great a man as you doubtless suppose yourself to be? I want none of thy bauble, child; in Sweden I could have fifty such,—aye and better and handsomer,—for the value of a seal's skin, that would cost me nothing but the flight of an arrow. Here—take thy plaything again; and, if thou wilt promise me to say nothing about it, I will give thee a bow and arrows, and teach thee how to shoot with them; and that will be better sport for thee,

I trow, than mass-mumbling,—and swinging incense-pots for the monks. Wilt thou promise me now, upon that cross—or wilt thou rather, like a true spawn of a Saxon priest, cherish thy revenge against me?"

"I will not promise you,"—said the boy,—and, at these words, the Northman's countenance grew dark, and he again began to look round; but changed his expression as Edmund proceeded:—"I will not promise you anything upon this blessed sign of our redemption,—because I know that you do not believe in it,—and that you make a mock of our holy religion,—for so the brethren, and my father Cynewulf, have told me very often:—and you speak foully and wickedly when you say that Christians love revenge. Christ taught us to forgive our enemies, and to bless those that curse us, and to do good to those that do evil unto us;—and I do not desire to be revenged upon you, though I am sure you have been very cruel to me,—and I shall not say anything of your hard-heartedness to your captain, or to any body,—because I believe that you would be punished very se-

verely, or else you would not be so afraid of his knowing it,—and would not have offered to give me a bow and arrows, and to teach me to shoot with them, if I would promise not to complain of you. It is not because the chain is gold, and the cross a precious stone,—and that you know as well as I do, for all your pretending to call it a market-day gift,—that I like it so much; but because it was given to me by my father Cynewulf, whom your wicked people have killed."

Here the child covered his face with his hands, bent down his head till it rested on his knees, and burst into tears.

The expression upon the countenance of the rough soldier underwent continual change during the course of the boy's address. It was at first, as we have said, dark and threatening; with the left hand he threw back the long red hair which, as he stooped over the boat, had fallen into his neck; and, resting the open palm of the other upon the knee of the right leg, which he extended a little, as if on the point of making a sudden spring upon his victim,—began to look cautiously round, that he might be sure of hav-

ing no witness of the deed which he meditated. When, however, Edmund proceeded to talk of the forgiveness of our enemies, inculcated by Christ to his followers, he turned his head suddenly, and fixed a curious and scrutinizing eye upon the speaker, as if in wonder how such doctrine would influence the conduct of its professor; but when the boy disclaimed any wish to have revenge for the wrong done to him,—and that because punishment would fall upon the wrong doer,—the soldier could scarce prevent his look from expressing the contempt with which he heard the avowal of such pusillanimous sentiments. He felt instantly towards the boy that sense of superior wisdom,—that supercilious pity of amiable weakness,—that consciousness of more manly impulses in his own breast,—which at the present, as well as in all former ages, have taught the selfish, the proud, and the coarse, wordly-minded man to contemn the feelings, and the principles of the generous and pure hearted. Sure now that he had nothing to fear from so idiotic a lad, he heard without anger the concluding reproach; and, with a smile of contempt

as the boy bent down and burst into tears for the slaughter of a few dry old monks,—as he internally phrased it,—took to the oars, and pulled stoutly across the water, singing, to the cadence of the strokes, portions of an old northern battle song.

> " We hewed with the steel, sharp edged;
> We smote with the stormy lance:
> The earth was drenched with gore;
> The river ran blood to the sea.
> Thousands before us fell—
> The axe rang loud on the iron shield,—
> The brazen helmet rang;—
> The helmet of brass, and the corslet of steel,
> Burst beneath our strokes.
> Was it not joyous as when
> The bridegroom goes to the couch
> Of the bride with the locks of gold?"

While Rolf pulled over the water, and amused himself by singing, with a hoarse and tuneless voice, the song, of which the preceding portion is all that our materials have preserved to us, Edmund sat with head depressed, giving unrestrained vent to the agony that preyed upon

his sensitive heart. He had not dared to look towards the monastery; and had long ceased to hear the sounds that still issued from it. They came however at length to shore; and Rolf, cautioning the boy to remember his promise, and to keep his trinket out of sight, if he did not desire to have it forced from him,—together with his life perhaps, if he resisted,—by the first Northman that should find him unguarded,—lifted him from the boat; and, taking him by the hand, bade him dry his eyes, and put on a cheerful look, —for that the men of the north despised tears, and were apt to comfort puling children with blows instead of caresses.

Edmund's pride came now to strengthen him: praying inwardly to Christ for support,—as he had been taught by his pious instructors to do, whenever his own heart tempted him to go wrong, or the weight of affliction pressed him down,— he went on in silence, seeing little that was about him, and horrified by the perpetual remembrance of the deeds that he had witnessed. After walking about two hours, during which time they frequently passed small groups of the northern sol-

diers, and were greeted occasionally by the rude jests of such as had knowledge of Rolf, they came to a sort of encampment, the sole defences of which consisted of the piled up baggage, the carts, and all the cumbrous equipage that formed the train of a northern plundering expedition.

In the space which these inclosed, there stood a few tents; and others were in the progress of erection. There were but few soldiers here,—if we limit that title to human creatures of the male sex,—but there were some hundreds of women, who seemed to have the strength and masculine air of men; and of whom many knew how to wield the sword or the axe, when called upon to defend themselves from a foe, or to chastise even their own brothers, husbands, or fathers, when they beheld them flying from battle. There were also not a few children, and sturdy boys, who bore the bold and fierce look of their fathers, and whose ruling desire was to go with them to the battle, so soon as their age and strength entitled them to claim the white shield and the spear with which it was the custom to invest the

youth, as a kind of diploma which gave them a right to practise in the field. New comers were perpetually pouring in; and the uproar of mingled shouts, and voices clamouring against each other, was excessive.

The heart of Edmund sickened as he entered among these wild people; and he regretted that he had not perished with his companions, and the brethren, in the sacred walls of the monastery, rather than have to endure life with savages like these. There stood, at the farther side of the rude camp, five or six tents, of a size and appearance which denoted them to belong to leaders of the army; and towards these Rolf, with his captive, hasted. Their progress was, however, frequently interrupted by the questionings of those to whom the soldier was familiarly known; and of these, in consequence of the place which Rolf held with Sidroc, one of their most powerful Sea-kings, the number was not few.

"Why what hast thou there?" said a tall, bright eyed girl, who, dressed in a woollen kirtle, reaching to the middle of the leg, and hanging loose about the waist, stood combing out her

long sandy coloured hair,—" why what butterfly hast thou here Rolf? Saxon, by the cream face and the shy look,—and yet a pretty lad o' my conscience. Give me a kiss, my little white rose with the dew drop on thy cheek; and don't hold down thy head as if sunshine never warmed thee."

Saying this she flung back her hair, and, stooping to the boy, impressed a hearty smack upon his lips. " Sweet as May blossom," said she, rising, and patting his head, " a very pretty lad, and a sweet! Do him no harm Rolf, though Saxon he be: do him no harm,—the honey-breathed rogue."

" Nay, nay, Fleda," said the soldier, " thou need not fear for him; he's under sure guiding. The good day to you, mistress Fleda,—and remember you owe me a kiss in payment for stopping me now,—and some moonlight evening, I'll ———"

" Ay?"—replied the laughing girl, interrupting him, " pray take it now,—for we Jutland lasses don't like putting off payment when we have the coin ready at our finger's ends,—there.

—you saucy roister," springing after him, and greeting his right cheek with a hearty smack of her palm,—" there's your kiss, in open day instead of moonlight,—and remember now that I have paid what I owed you."

" I shan't soon forget it,"—said he, turning back his head, as he walked on, rubbing his tingling cheek with the left hand,—" but I'll reckon with you again mistress Fleda some day, when I have nothing better to do."

" Ay ? when ?" replied she, with a quick nod of the head, looking sideways at him, as she walked back to her station,—" I never knew thee have aught *good* to do yet, Master Rolf, so it will be long before thou hast nothing *better*."

With a hearty laugh, she stooped then for her rude comb of horn, and proceeded with the work of her toilet.

" Saxon hedgehog !" muttered a grim-looking hag, glaring at the boy as he passed by,—" but the dogs will have him soon, I'll warrant him."

" Why Rolf,"—said a heavy-browed, bulky man, with portentous whiskers, and beard of

grizzled black—who made up to them, "what goods now?"

The harsh tones of his voice made Edmund shrink back; and his whole appearance was strange and frightful. He had upon his head a cap of brown fur, lined with steel, and was attired in a long blue garment of coarse cloth, buckled round the waist by his sword belt, but sufficiently open at the neck to show that he wore beneath it that kind of linked mail, which was called a *secret*, and which the dangerous company that he conversed with rendered necessary for his safety. In his right hand he carried a steel-pointed spear; a dagger was stuck in his belt; and his sword was long and crooked. "Why Rolf," said he,—"what spoil hast thou now? Ha—the flower-edged coat of fine woollen,—and the embroidered sleeve,—and the shoe rimmed with gilded leather,—thy booty, Rolf? A sword, and a helmet of iron, will I give thee if——"

"The lad is no booty of mine, Gormo," said Rolf, not waiting to hear the offer of the Russian slave-merchant,—"and thy price could not

reach him, if he were to be sold,—which, as I take it, he is not likely to be. He is under my safeguard,—and his master is Sidroc, the Vikingr."*

"Humph," replied the grim dealer in man's flesh, with a sound much resembling the grunt of a hog,—"then I will speak with the Sea-king, and perhaps I shall have the boy.—But couldst thou not, Rolf, let him slip from thee, or so,—thou knowest what I mean, good Rolf—I will give thee for thyself a good sword ——"

"Ay!" said Rolf, touching his own head with the fore-finger of his left hand,—"and Sidroc would speedily give me a better,—and thee too, if I should breathe one word of this to him,—which I shall not. Fare you well, old swine-back; and have a care how you go about to cozen the Sea-king Sidroc."

The Russian was little pleased with the tone in which this had been spoken, or with the appellative that Rolf had thought proper to greet him with; but he dared not reply to one whose breath,

* *Vikingr.* Kings of the bays, from their lying there in wait for prey.

as he well knew, might blow off his head; and contented himself, therefore, with shrugging his huge shoulders, and growling to himself as he walked away.

Edmund and his conductor had now reached the tents of the chiefs; and Rolf, addressing a female who stood near to one of them, over which was suspended a banner, bearing upon it the resemblance of an eagle, or a raven—for it might have passed for either,—that griped in his talons a large and gawdy-coloured serpent, —bade her haste, and acquaint the lady Aslauga, that he came from the Sea-king, and bore under his charge a Saxon boy, whom he was commanded to place in her care.

The woman, who was busily employed in the arrangement of certain articles which had met with a rapid and informal transference from their former owners, cast a curious look upon the boy; and, without returning any answer, passed into the tent. She did not remain there long; Rolf, however, found sufficient time to apply himself to a small vessel which stood beneath an open tent close by, and to gulp down a large hornful

of the *hlutres aloth*, or clear ale, which it contained. This he pronounced to be so excellent, that he would recommend to the boy a similar throat-cleanser; but, as the offer was declined, he again, with the same dispatch as before, made over the contents of the horn to the comfort of his own stomach.

"You monks,—and monklings too," said he, smacking his lips, as he replaced the horn upon the cask, "do not always prefer a dry mouth to a deep draught, if men speak sooth of you. But this is some fast day, I suppose, or some holy day, with you mummery Christians; and so you hold that good ale is a bad thing. Now, if you had been taught better, my little sparrow,—as soon you will be,—you would know that, in the Hall of Odin himself, one of the chief pleasures of the brave man who dies in battle is to sit at an everlasting feast, drinking ale out of the skulls of his enemies. Wot you o' that, my little relic-smacker? Wot you o' that? Is not that better than sitting dry-lipped on a cloud, bawling luyahs and zamas, as one of your priests at Bardeney told me you Christians hoped to do for ever?

But thou'lt change thy note ere long, my boy; and learn to drink ale, and cut down Christians with the best of us."

To this ignorant and unfeeling address Edmund was prompted to reply with indignation; but the return of the female prevented him. "The lady Aslauga is prepared to receive you," said she to Rolf; "and expects you instantly." He acknowledged the message with a nod; and, holding the boy by the hand, drew aside the drapery which formed the door of the tent, and immediately entered.

Upon a sort of couch, or throne, of width sufficient to accommodate three persons, and ornamented at the extremities by two carved and gilded figures, probably designed to represent lions, there sat a lady, richly attired, of a commanding presence, and exceeding beauty. The covering of the couch was a rich cloth of purple; but, where it had been thrown back at the sides, or arms, it showed underneath a soft cushion formed from the hide of a bear, one claw of which hung down in front, and appeared to have been gilded. A table, adorned with plates of silver,

and studded with gems of various colours, stood near her; and upon it lay a small silver bell, and a piece of embroidered silk, upon which she had just been busied. A footstool of crimson cloth, interwoven with flowers of yellow silk, supported her right foot. Her shoes were of tawny leather, broad at the toe, and laced close to the foot. She was clad in a loose upper robe of purple silk,—having a broad band of gold embroidery at the hem, and a little below the knee, —where, having partially fallen aside, it discovered an under garment of light blue, wrought of silk and fine woollen intermingled. She had no covering upon the head, but that which nature had given her,—a profusion of the most beautiful golden hair, hanging in locks, delicately twisted on either side, and of such a length behind that, had they not been turned up, and loosely bound with slender bands of golden chain-work, they might probably have reached to the knee.

Such was the appearance of the lady to whom Edmund was now presented. We would not assert that his short and somewhat confused glances

on entering had supplied him with an inventory quite so minute as that which we have given: and will even admit that his attention was for some time confined to three of its items,—to the beautiful, though solemn, and almost severe, countenance of the lady,—secondly, to the extraordinary colour and brightness of her hair, —and lastly, to the small, but richly plated, table that stood beside her, and, from its resemblance to such as he had seen used in the ceremonials of the church, immediately suggested to him a feeling that, in its present place and purposes, it was undergoing a perpetual desecration.

The lady looked awhile in silence at the boy as he stood before her: a smile began then to gather round her mouth; and her bright blue eyes, as they glanced rapidly over him, lost all their sternness, and glistened like those of a pleased parent looking upon a favourite child. She spoke not, however, to him as yet; but, turning to Rolf, who stood respectfully a little behind the boy, demanded his message. Having heard this from him, together with an account of the incident which had moved the Sea-

king to rescue the boy, she bade him to consider the child under her own safeguard; and, having ordered him to remain near the outer tent, that, if wanted, he might be at hand, informed him that he might retire. Turning then to Edmund, who was bathed in tears, called forth anew by the brief recital which Rolf had just made, she held forth her hand to him, and bade him be seated beside her.

"Do not weep, my child," said she to him, putting back with her left hand the curls which had fallen over his forehead and eyes, and with her right gently pressing his shoulder;—"do not weep. You are now under the protection of one whose command even the fiercest of our nation will respect. No harm shall befall you: you shall be my own attendant for a while, till you grow taller and stronger: and then the brave Sea-king, Sidroc, who preserved you, will teach you how to use the sword and the lance; and you shall go with our valiant soldiers to battle, and win honour and renown, and the favour of the great Odin, who will at last, if you live and die bravely, receive you as a guest at his eternal ban-

quet in the Hall of Valhalla, where you shall feast for ever upon the flesh of the boar Serimner, and drink mead out of the skulls of your enemies."

"It is a false and heathenish doctrine,"—said the boy indignantly,—"and they that believe in it will go to hell, and be burned for ever with the fire that is never quenched."

Aslauga smiled at his vehemence; and then gently frowned upon him, as she told him that he did not understand what he spoke of. But his spirit was excited, and he went on.

"If I *am* to be a slave, I will strive to serve *you* lady, cheerfully, because you are not like the rest of the bloody Northmen, and because you look kindly, and speak sweetly to me; but I will never learn to fight with the sword, and go to battle with your cruel soldiers against Christians; and, if I live to be a man, I will fight for my own countrymen, and kill every Northman that I can."

"By the locks of Freya!" * replied the lady, with a smile, "thou art likely to prove a terri-

* Note F.

ble warrior; and Sidroc may have done ill work to-day in saving thee from the sword of Hubbo. But I like thee not the less for thy spirit; and can forgive thy Christian hatred to our nobler religion, and to our braver soldiers, who have vanquished your effeminate men, and made spoil of their riches. Have a care, however, my child, how you repeat such words in the ears of others, or they may bring upon you a different kind of answer. You are young and ignorant, and have been taught to hate the only glory worthy a man's striving after,—the renown of bravery, and success in battle: but in time you will learn better things than those which you have been taught by mass-singing monks, and lazy Saxon churls."

"I never shall!" interjected the boy.

"Well, well,—I will not now speak farther with you upon these matters: dry your eyes, and strive to look cheerful. You have probably lost friends to-day whom you loved".....

"I have, I have," cried he sobbing aloud. "And have not strength of mind," continued she, "to bear it calmly: but the people of the

north despise all such lamentings; and you must learn so to do also, or it will be the worse with you."

"I have lost my father Cynewulf,"—replied the boy, bursting anew into tears, "and all the brethren of the monastery, who were so good to me,—and all my little companions, whom I loved,—and I cannot help shedding tears for them."

"And I,"—said the lady, interrupting him, "*I* have lost a husband who was a king,—and bravest of the brave,—and the most terrible of the sons of Odin! Ragnar, the dreaded and the invincible, was my husband;—and he perished, —miserably perished by the hands of the cruel Ella! But I did not weep for him. I called on his sons for vengeance,—and I came with them to witness its accomplishment."

Her countenance, while she spake, became stern, and her dilating eyes flashed light.

"Man, nor woman, nor child," continued she, "has hitherto been spared in their wrath: but my own vengeance has long since been slaked; and my soul has sickened at the tales of blood. Thou, child, art the first whom slaughter has spared;

and I hail the act of mercy as an omen of milder warfare. But enough of this. If thou hast lost friends, thou mayst perhaps find one in me,—if thou has lost companions and playfellows, thou shalt have one at least in my daughter. But remember, that the kindness which I extend to thee unsought, it must be thy labour to deserve. I have in me a woman's weakness that craves somewhat which it may protect and love; and my heart feels a yearning towards thee. I would fain be as a parent to thee,—but thou must also be to me as a son;"—

She paused, and looked upon the upturned face of the boy,—then, with a sigh concluded.

"And, if thy soul be as thy countenance, would that thou wert *indeed* my child!"

As she ended, she bent her head, and tenderly kissed the boy.

"And, if you were not a Danish lady,"—replied he, looking affectionately at her, "I would wish that you could be my mother:—but I never knew my mother,—for she died, they say, when I was a very little child."

"The better for her!" said the lady. "She

might have felt more than the bitterness of death this day, had she lived to know that thou wert in the hands of her enemies. But be thou henceforth to me as a son, and I will be to thee a mother. Thou art very beautiful,—and *I* am also, even yet, beautiful: thine eyes are blue like mine,—thy locks are like these which, while I was yet but a shepherd's daughter, dazzled the eyes of the king, and made him sue to me to partake his throne. Somewhat have they now lost their golden brightness,—yet the strongest king of the north would be proud to call them his."

While uttering the last words, she disengaged from the rest one yellow tress, and, letting it fall upon the shoulder of the boy, sat for a moment fondly comparing it with his more tender, but less brilliant, locks.

"See, my love," she continued, taking in her hand a portion of each, "see how like they are to each other; gold of but different shades. But thou shalt see my child, my sweet Windreda,—she too is like thee,—but paler now, for there has been a fever upon her that neither herb nor

Runic charm could for a while subdue. Till then her cheek was rosy as thine, and her eye as clear: but her strength is fast returning; and the spring breezes will soon restore the faded bloom."

While speaking thus, she readjusted the displaced lock, and then gently rang the small silver bell.

"Cutha," said she to a female who entered, "bring my daughter to me;—and let food be placed upon the table, though it is not yet the hour for our mid-day meal. The boy is wearied, and has not broken his fast."

The attendant retired, and presently returned, leading in a girl about seven years of age, pale and delicate, but of great beauty, and with a sweetness and gentleness in her look that made Edmund instantly, and almost unconsciously, take her soft hand in his, and feel as though he had found in her a sister. Without speaking to each other, they remained a moment thus; and Aslauga smiled affectionately upon them as they stood and looked up to her, expecting what she would say.

She soon introduced them each to the other,

and explained to them the terms upon which she desired that they should for the present hold their acquaintance. An intimacy was rapidly formed between them: but the spirits of the boy underwent perpetual changes; and the smiles of one moment were frequently exchanged for tears in the next. He was pleased with the beauty and the sweetness of his companion,—but his thoughts were continually reverting to those whom he had lost, and to the horrors that he had witnessed. Affairs of greater moment soon required the attention of the queen Aslauga; and the children were dismissed to an adjoining tent, and left to their own resources.

CHAPTER III.

The day passed on, and the evening was now fast approaching. The increasing sounds without had for some time announced that the soldiers were pouring into the camp; but Edmund had no curiosity to look upon them, though Rolf, who had been commanded to attend constantly upon him, to ensure his safety, had several times endeavoured to entice him out. A trumpet blast at length proclaimed the coming of Sidroc; and in a short time, bending his lofty figure as he entered, the Sea-king stood within the tent.

Edmund shuddered as he saw him, for he thought instantly of the scene in which he had first beheld him: but the tone of the Northman's voice reassured him; and his look was that of one who contemplates an object that he has befriended, and feels disposed to love. He stoop-

ed to take the boy in his arms; but there was blood upon his hands, and upon his armour; and Edmund shrank in horror from him.

"Tush, boy!" said he, understanding the look and the action,—"'tis neither child's nor monk's. Enough has there this day been spilt of both,—but not by my hands, nor by my counsel. Come along with me. You must walk with me through the camp, that the soldiers may see you, and know to whom you belong; and what the peril, therefore, that will await him that should dare to lay a harsh hand upon you. But you must get rid of this squeamish dread of a few crimson drops on warrior's hand or sword. Blood and death will stare you every day in the face; and you must learn to meet the sight manfully. A brave man prizes his life at nothing,—and wherefore should he flinch to inflict upon his foes that death which is ever welcome to himself,—so it but come with glory in the field. By my faith, thou wer't thyself valiant enough this morning, my little Thor,—and had'st need of nought but a sharp sword, and a stronger arm, to have drawn his best blood from the gentle Hubbo: and why

then turn so pale at sight of a few drops shed by another? But mark me now, from the first. With *me* you are safe from every man,—and with Rolf will soon be safe from every man but one only. Hubbo and I have this day crossed swords about you: so that you are already, you see, a person of some importance among us. He saw, and heard you, when you were about to chastise him so valorously,—and has twice insulted me for having protected you. Keep therefore from his sight,—unless I am with you. Hubbo never pardons,—whether it be blow from man, or scratch from infant. Tempt him not then to revenge, by giving him occasion to strike when I am not by. Rolf would be no safeguard for you, but would probably fall by the same blow."

"The Queen Aslauga has promised to protect me from all harm," said the boy, "and therefore that wicked man will not dare to hurt me."

"Trust not to that, my little hero. From all other men, her protection might secure you,—but not from Hubbo, when the blood-fit is upon him. Enough now;—remember my words, an'

you hope to live. So now, don your cap, and come away."

Edmund would fain have remained where he was; but the voice of the strong Sea-king, though kind, had a power over him that he could not resist; and he hastened to obey. Snatching up therefore a rich cap which had been given to him by the Queen Aslauga, he placed it upon his head; and, with his right hand clasped in the left of his preserver, went swiftly from the tent.

Quickly passing beyond the small intrenchment of baggage, &c. which we have already noticed,—and which was chiefly designed for the temporary use of the women and children, during the absence of the soldiery,—they walked through an extensive camp, in which stood some hundreds of tents, hastily put up for the night. The soldiers were scattered in every direction: and all busily employed. The noise and confusion stunned and alarmed the Saxon boy, as he walked quickly forward amid these fierce and wild looking men. Some were preparing for their meal, and some for their bed. In a small brook that ran through the camp, hundreds were

washing their soiled and blood-stained bodies. Here they were cleansing their weapons, or doffing their battle-gear,—and there they were making disposition of their spoil, or preparation against the command for instant march. The powerful Sidroc was of course known by all: and many a curious look was turned upon his little attendant, whom, having once seen, it was not easy to forget.

The clangor of a trumpet, and a wild shout, at length gave notice of the return of Hubbo to the camp; and was instantly followed by another trumpet, and another shout, which proclaimed the approach of his brother, Ingwar. Edmund drew back trembling, and begged that he might return to the tent of the queen: but Sidroc held him firmly.

"What hast thou to fear, foolish boy?"—said he; "am I not with thee?—and who then shall dare to touch a hair upon thy head?"

"I do not fear,"—replied Edmund, turning pale as death,—"I know that he dare not harm me,—but I cannot bear to look upon that horrid man who killed the holy abbot before my face.

I cannot look at him,—I cannot hear his dreadful and savage voice;—Oh! in pity take me away."

"Silence, weak boy!"—said the Sea-king, in a stern tone,—"for your own sake, and for mine you *must* see him, and be seen by him. Shall Sidroc retire because Hubbo is at hand? Let him but know that I stole off with my rescued slave, because his trumpet was heard, and, before the morrow, not the tent of the Queen Aslauga herself,—widow of his father though she be,—would protect you from his fury. Face to face we must meet him; and he will then understand that the life which I have preserved from him will be defended with my own. On then! and shake no more thus like a lamb beneath the gripe of a wolf, if thou wouldst not tempt me, in disdain of thy cowardice, to fling thee to him, like a worthless cur before the trampling of a wild bull."

These last words were spoken with a sternness, amounting almost to fierceness, which it was impossible for a mere boy to resist: and Edmund, without speaking a word, surrendered

himself to the guidance of the impetuous Sea-king. After walking a short distance, they beheld Hubbo and Ingwar advancing at a rapid pace, followed by some hundreds of soldiers, heavily laden with booty of various kinds. Repeated shouts from those already in the camp hailed the new comers, and were by these returned with equal joyousness.

The appearance and demeanour of Hubbo, as he came on, sufficiently justified the appellative which Sidroc had fixed upon him. His tall and bulky form, rocking from side to side—the swing of his ponderous limbs, and the jar of his armour, at every long, rapid, but heavy foot-fall, seemed to indicate the strength and the unwieldiness of the bull. His broad, and flame-like face, hedged in with coarse, curling, red hair and beard,—his wide mouth, and lips of Ethiopian thickness—his dilated nostrils,—and small, snake-like, grey eyes, bright and fierce,—formed together an expression of brutal ferociousness, headlong daring, and intractable obstinacy of will, which was instantly felt as at once fearful and abhorrent. His voice was harsh, deep, and loud,—and his lips,

when he spoke in anger, were instantly spattered with foam. He was now doubly hateful in appearance,—for face, hands, and person, were thickly spotted with blood; and the unsheathed sword, which he waved in triumph as he came, was crimsoned to the hilt.

Ingwar, who walked beside him,—though his brother by both parents,—bore no resemblance at all to Hubbo. He was somewhat below the common stature,—broadly built, and of a swarthy complexion. There was less of blind fury depicted in his face, than in that of Hubbo; but there were equal courage, and equal fierceness, joined with an expression of more intellect, or perhaps more cunning,—and a more unrelaxing pertinacity of purpose. Like his brother's, his voice was dissonant and loud: his step was long and firm, like his,—but his motion was not unwieldy, nor even ungraceful.

No wonder that, at the approach of two such formidable persons,—reeking from the slaughter of his friends and companions, and disposed probably to inflict the same fate upon himself,—the heart of the young and gently nurtured boy

should throb with mingled abhorrence and fear. Once or twice, as he now approached nearer to the chiefs, Edmund looked timidly up to the face of his preserver; but all there spoke of calm strength, and entire self-possession, and conscious superiority.

"Bring forth the *nithing* * dastard!"—roared Hubbo, as he strode on,—"bring him forth!—By the spear of Odin, he shall die before I touch bread, or taste of the horn!"

Edmund's heart sank within him; and a sickness like death paralyzed his limbs at the sound of that horrid voice, and at that threat which he deemed aimed at himself. Sidroc felt the relaxing hand, and saw the faltering step. "Have a care, boy," he said, in a suppressed tone, and in a manner intended at once to restore his confidence, and to warn him that now he must not dare to fear,—"have a care! No harm is meant to *you:* and there stands not on this ground the man that dares to lay the hand upon you. Enough! tread firmly, and come on. We must

* A term among the northern nations expressive of the profoundest contempt.

pass them; and shall soon know of whom he speaks."

"Bring forth the nithing wretch, and the hurdles,"—again shouted Hubbo—"and let his swift feet carry him down to Niflheim!" *

By this time Sidroc and the palpitating boy were approaching near to the furious chief, who still continued vociferating to those about him, and to such as he saw on either hand, as he walked on. His eye at length fixed upon Sidroc and the child,—and he turned suddenly to the left.

"Here is quagmire deep enough," cried he, stamping upon the ground,—"spades and pick-axes here! Break open the surface! Mud enough beneath for a score such! Bring here the hurdles, and drag the coward to his fate!" †

Determined to have speech, however brief, with the boisterous Sea-king, Sidroc walked deliberately towards the spot, and himself the first addressed him. Hubbo started suddenly round, as he heard the voice of Sidroc close to him, and

* Niflheim. See Note B.

† Note G.

made a faint motion with his sword as if to guard off an apprehended blow.

" Who is to die now, Hubbo ?" said he,—" Nay man,—put by thy sword ; and think not of the hot words that have had time enough now to cool."

" My sword is drawn, or sheathed, at no man's pleasure but my own, Earl Sidroc,"—replied Hubbo, with a lowering brow ; " often enough has it been sheathed to-day,—and once or twice methought too often to Earl Sidroc's liking,—but the scabbard pleased him not : and yet"—looking at the pale and trembling boy,—" if it had found one more sheath, it would, methinks, have shed little blood the more, though it might have perhaps found water enough to wash off its old stains."

" I understand you, Lord of Odinsee," replied Sidroc, " and you will understand me also when I say that one drop of that water shall be had by no man at a price less than one pound of his own best blood. I have preserved the boy,—and the Queen Aslauga has extended to him her protection. Life for life shall be the sole

condition upon which any man shall dare to touch his. Enough that we have once spoken upon this; and let it no more bring strife betwixt us."

"The curse of darkness upon the urchin!" bellowed Hubbo,—"take him from my sight! What heed I where the worm crawls, so he slime not my path. Heed but thyself that he grow not to a serpent, and thank thee with a sting. Look you, Earl Sidroc,—you have seen a tempest ere now, issue from a cloud that looked at first no bigger than my shield,—and, if he live, you will see a pestilent dragon rise out of that wriggling grub."

Sidroc was about to reply when a continued shouting, through which might be heard at intervals the cries of a man who appeared to be supplicating for mercy, attracted his attention. Hubbo turned at the sound, and raised a harsh and savage laugh. "Ha-ha"—said he—the nithing wretch has run his last race! Pity one so light of foot should after all stick in the mire!"

"Who, then, is he?" demanded Sidroc.

"The coward, Olaf,"—answered Hubbo,

" who lost us a thousand men, and our three brave Sea-kings, by lifting his heels too quickly off the field of Trekyngham, when the battle was hottest. We must bring back the discipline of the good old times if we would have the Raven of the North invincible as heretofore. I determined upon his punishment so soon as we could spare the hour ; and now it is come, for to-morrow we must away with the dawn towards Peterborough. The fat monks there have a hive better stocked than even this of Croyland ; and we must not give them time to carry off their honey. You go with us for a slice of the comb I suppose, Earl Sidroc, though, now and then, you take a fancy to snatch away a grub from the burning. But every man to his bauble. I quarrel no more with you on that score ;—the rich crypt that you smelt out when every hound in the pack had passed it by, may make amends for your having cheated the steel of a few pounds of monk-flesh.

" I tell you again, Hubbo," replied Sidroc,—" that this cheating of the steel is but the despoiling of your worst enemy. The sword was

made for the arm of the soldier in battle, and not for the hand of the butcher; and again I warn you that this ruthless massacre of unresisting men, women, and children, will rouse against us a hatred, and a desperation, that will at length overwhelm us, ay, were we ten times stronger and more numerous than we are."

"Let them come on!" cried Hubbo—"let them come on!"

"For every aged man, woman, or child that falls under your bloody steel,"—continued Sidroc, —"there will start forth twenty determined soldiers, who might else have slept on in their smoky huts, and followed to the field nothing but their cattle, their sheep, or their hogs."

"The better scouring for our steel then—which might else grow rusty for want of work;" said Hubbo. "The thicker the wheat springs up, the richer the harvest—that's all:—and if Saxon blood, as you say, makes it shoot so quick, —why, in the name of Odin, should we stint to pour it out?"

"The harvest that will grow from such manuring"—replied Sidroc, "will be spear points,

and sword edges,—and those you will at last find to be of no pleasant digestion."

The noise of the crowd who were hurrying on the wretch destined for punishment was now so loud that the concluding words escaped the ear of Hubbo, who immediately began with great glee to busy himself with giving directions to the executioners, and with heaping invectives upon the miserable victim. Edmund caught a glance of the wretch, as, with wild eye and clasped hands, he implored mercy from those who never pardoned: he could not endure the sight, and eagerly struggled to escape from his conductor. This, however, was impossible. Sidroc beheld the agony of his spirit, and strove to quiet him.

"This man, my boy"—said he,—taking him in his arms and speaking in his ear,—"has disgraced the banner of the North by a cowardly flight from battle; and richly he merits his punishment. It is well that you should see the infamy with which we cover the wretch who disgraces his country. Look! they drag him to the pit."

"Oh, Christ! Oh, Christ!" cried the boy,

hiding his face in the neck of Sidroc, "Take me away! Take me away!"

At this moment a loud shriek, heard over all the shouts and savage laughter, rung in his ear: and, involuntarily, he turned his eyes towards the spot whence it came. He beheld a naked human figure rise into the air, and descend with a heavy plash into a pit of black mire where it instantly sunk. With a stifled and convulsive shriek, the boy sank backward, and would have fallen to the ground had not Sidroc caught and supported him. Pitying his weakness, the Sea-king immediately made way through the throng, and bore him to the tent of Aslauga.

Kindness, not unmixed with gentle reproof of his feebleness, was shown to him by the lady: and his little playfellow, Windreda, strove to amuse, at once, and to shame him; but he had no smile to return for her drollery, and no word to answer her reproaches. His heart was crushed; and he prayed inwardly that God would release him from such a wicked world,—or give him strength to escape from those hideous barbarians. He was put to bed, and Aslauga herself

prepared for him a draught of medicinal herbs. The din in the camp at length died away: darkness was in the tent,—and a heavy slumber closed the eyes which, since their last opening, had witnessed so many horrors.

CHAPTER IV.

It is not our purpose to attend the savage hordes in their career of blood. On the day following the catastrophe of Croyland, they marched to Peterborough, where stood a monastery which, for the splendour of its architecture, and its library, the gradual accumulation of two centuries, was the boast of the age. Resistance here proved as useless as submission had been found by the fraternity of Croyland. Hoping something from the strength of their walls, the monks determined on defence. But the gates were forced, after a brief resistance, and every human creature that the place contained was mercilessly slaughtered. Gorged with plunder, the barbarians set fire to the noble pile; and on the next day commenced their march to Huntingdon.

The post of guarding the rear, which contain-

ed the women and children, the baggage of the army, and the immense plunder, had been given to Sidroc and his brother. Along with these came, of course, the Saxon boy. A blight seemed to have fallen upon him. His cheek had lost its rosy hue; the brightness had fled from his eye. The strong animal spirits that had often prompted him to freaks which drew upon him the mild reproof of the monks, were now exchanged for a total torpor of soul. He took mechanically the food that was placed before him,—but his look was almost that of idiocy. A ghastly nightmare seemed to lie upon him. Thought was stagnant; and one dull feeling of horror alone was all that made him sensible of life. The Queen Aslauga, and her beautiful child, in vain endeavoured to arouse him. In the hope that bodily exercise might perhaps stir the sluggish mind, he was at length removed from the carriage, in which he had ridden with them, and ordered to walk near to the horse of Sidroc, and to keep in his eye.

He had proceeded for some time, and the motion of his limbs had, to a certain degree, given

impulse to his thoughts: but the sole idea upon which he dwelt was that of escaping from the hands of the barbarians; and the sole feeling that he cherished was a determination to risk his life in the attempt, whenever an opportunity should offer itself.

The main body of the army was now far advanced, and the two Sidrocs, with their cavalry, remained to protect the rear. Of these great part had passed over the river Nen by a long and narrow bridge, when a sudden outcry gave notice that some accident had occurred behind them. It was immediately discovered that two of the cars, laden with great booty, had been overturned into a deep pool on the left of the bridge, and had dragged the cattle with them. A scene of confusion immediately followed; and, while every one was earnestly engaged in rescuing what he could from the water, Edmund, who had been forgotten in the hurry,—sprang from the road,—ran with the utmost of his speed across a broad meadow,—and plunged at last head foremost into the dense copse which skirted a large and ancient wood. With great

difficulty he forced his way through the tangled boughs, and at every moment thought he heard behind the shouts of his pursuers. The crackling of the small branches, broken down by his own feet and struggling arms, appeared to him like sword-strokes hewing a path behind him. For an instant he paused to listen: there was a sound like the hoofs of horses rapidly beating upon the green turf: he stood aghast and afraid to move; but an instant more convinced him that it proceeded from the throbbings of his own heart. With flushed cheek, open mouth, and widely dilated eyes, he stood, and anxiously listened for any sound that might give token of pursuit. There was a tumultuous din,—thick tramplings of feet, and shoutings of men who called incessantly upon each other,—but they might be engaged solely upon the rescue of their cars, their wealth, and their cattle, from the water, —his view was limited to the leaves around him, and he could not relieve his heart from the dreadful uncertainty of what the next moment might bring to him. Eager to push forward as far as he could from the presence of the dreaded

barbarians, he again turned his back toward the spot whence the sounds came, and, bending his head, forced his way through the complicated foliage.

He issued at length from the copsewood thicket; and found himself near to the entrance of the wood, where his path would be more open, and would permit a swifter flight. It did not, however, escape him that the same facility of passage would permit to his enemies a swifter pursuit; and he hesitated awhile whether to advance or to trust for concealment to his present hiding-place. But terror still urged him to flight. The wood was deep and dark,—the evening was drawing on—the enemy was near. Should his escape have been noticed, instant pursuit would follow;—the path which he had torn through the thicket would be seen,—he would be tracked like a beast,—he would be carried back in derision,—and a second escape would be perhaps rendered impossible. Every step removed from the terrible Northman seemed as a step toward freedom. But he must cross a slip of elevated ground which stood be-

twixt the thicket and the wood,—and, in the instant of his passing over, might be detected by his pursuers. His breath came with quicker pantings,—his eye glanced with wilder fire. He threw back his curled locks, and listened like the hare when he catches the yell of the opening pack.

At this moment the wind, slowly veering round, brought with gradually increasing distinctness and power the clamours of the Northern soldiers. It seemed to the affrighted boy as though they were rapidly approaching. He darted across the open space, and plunged into the wood. But, in the moment of his passing, he could not avoid turning toward his enemies one hasty glance; and that glance showed him the peril of his situation. In the same point of time, he heard the shouts which announced that his flight was seen,—and beheld the advance of his pursuers. Seven or eight horsemen, with Sidroc himself, whose commanding form, sheathed from head to foot in dark linked mail, could not, even in that instantaneous glance, be mistaken, were behind him, urging their horses to full

speed. With a quick cry of fear the poor boy plunged into the wood, and ran with the energy of despair.

But a crash and a trampling behind soon warned him that the horsemen had dashed in among the hazel bushes which grew thick at the entrance, and that, in a moment more, he must be seen and captured. There stood just before him an immense and aged oak, decayed and hollow at the foot. He threw himself flat upon the earth—crawled like a worm into the narrow cavity :—stood upright,—caught with a convulsive grasp at a projection above ; and with a painful struggle raising himself, and planting his feet against the crumbling sides of the tree, awaited there his doom.

In a moment the hoofs of the horses shook the earth around him : and, through a narrow cleft in the thin bark, he beheld Sidroc and two horsemen rush by. But immediately afterwards he heard them stop.

" He cannot be far from this spot,"—cried the Sea-king,—" I had a glance of his cap as he passed the old oak there. Part, my men, and

make a circuit here. Ride gently,—and touch the bushes with your lance points as you pass: but harm him not on your lives. Boy,—Edmund,—foolish child! where are you? Come forth,—and you shall not be hurt.—The queen Aslauga will miss you,—and your playfellow Windreda. Delay us no longer, silly lad, but come from your lurking-place. By my horse-shoulder, * I swear no harm shall come to thee."

While calling thus, Sidroc continued to ride slowly here and there, turning his head in every direction, and at intervals giving his orders to the men who were pursuing the search.

"Try the bramble-thicket there, Sigibert,—the little fox would not heed a scratch on the nose, if he could earth himself well after it.—More to the left, Guthlac;—look into the holly bush;—mayhap you'll find a red-cheeked berry there, though a little early in the season. Rolf, leap from thy horse, and search the old oak behind thee;—it may be hollow enough to hold as great a squirrel as this. I would take it on my

* Note H.

sword-blade that I saw the gleam of his embroidered cap close to it."

Rolf rode up to the oak, and struck his lance against it. The heart of the trembling boy within answered with a stroke that, to his own ear, sounded almost as loud: his limbs quivered; and the decayed wood fell with a dry rustling from his feet. He heard the man dismount; and saw the aperture beneath darkened as he stooped to look into it. The helmet, however, prevented the immediate accomplishment of his purpose. With an oath that nothing larger than a badger could have crept in there, Rolf withdrew his head; but was, nevertheless, busied in unbuckling the thong that secured the casque; and must inevitably have discovered the game, had not a sudden shout, from three or four voices at once, arrested his hand.

An old wolf, that had received a hurt from the dogs,—or perhaps in contest with one of his own species,—had hitherto lain quiet in his lair, hoping probably that the unwelcome visitors would soon retire, and leave him unmolested. When, however, the disturbers remained, and even ap-

proached nearer to his place of concealment, he raised himself, and began stealthily to decamp under cover of the bushes, trusting perhaps more to their shelter than to his own swiftness. The rustling and motion of the leaves in the underwood did not pass unnoticed; and the unseen cause was, naturally enough, supposed by our hunters to be the game in present chase. The consequence of this discovery was the shout already mentioned.

"Soho! soho!—See where he steals away," was the cry,—"Down to the right in the fern brake!"

An immediate pursuit in that direction followed; and Rolf, as eager as the rest, started up, mounted his horse, and rode off at full speed.

The heart of the trembling boy, as he heard the receding hoofs, sank within him like that of the criminal who finds himself suddenly snatched from impending death. *His* was, however, a temporary reprieve only, not a final acquittal, —and the fate which he had that moment escaped, might in the next overtake him. With intensest anxiety he listened to the sounds of pursuit; and

vainly strove to guess the cause that had so suddenly diverted it. The voice of Sidroc at length reached him.

"Stop—stop!" he cried, "The ground is hollow and dangerous. Leap from your horses, three or four of you, and thread the brake on foot. By the eyes of Freya! the urchin winds the brush-wood like a fox—Stop, fool! or the lance head may kiss you in the shoulders—why Alric,—Sigibert,—let him not 'scape you thus! —Down in the hollow.—Ride round, two of you, and meet him in front!"

The lessening sounds now gave assurance to Edmund that his pursuers were receding considerably from him; his position, moreover, had become so painful that nothing but a sense of instant danger could have supported him in the farther endurance of it: relaxing therefore his hold, he dropped to the ground, and, cautiously putting forth his head from the cavity, looked round that he might see if any one lingered near him. Not one was visible; and he crept forth. But they would almost certainly return by the way they had gone,—and his present hiding-place

might then undergo the scrutiny that it had just now so narrowly missed. Yet he felt a kind of gratitude to the old trunk that had so well shielded him; and a sentiment amounting almost to shame at the thought of quitting a tried friend for one of which he knew nothing. Looking upward to the hoary oak, he thought he might by means of the small shoots, which issued from its decayed sides, clamber up, and conceal himself with equal safety, and more ease, in the wide spreading hollow at its top. Without delay, therefore, he proceeded upon his task; and, being light and active, speedily stept from branch to branch,—wound round and round, and at length seated himself securely on its summit. Here, thickly hedged in by small branches and leaves, and completely hidden from view, he awaited the return of the horsemen.

Nor was he long kept in suspense. Mingling laughter with execrations upon the unlucky wolf that had led them thus astray, and whom they had at last fairly detected as he scrambled up a gravelly bank, and again disappeared amid a tangled mass of underwood upon its summit, the

riders soon reappeared, and began to renew the search.

Entirely concealed by the thick foliage from the view of those beneath, Edmund was, nevertheless, able, through its small interstices, to see with perfect distinctness, every motion of his pursuers. But the search was now carried on with diminished hope of success, and consequently with abated spirit and vigour. After riding round and round, looking up to every tree, and beating upon every bush, within such limits as they considered likely to contain the fugitive,—they were evidently preparing to abandon the pursuit.

"Curses upon the headstrong little fool!" cried Sidroc,—"he will perish by the wolves if he remains here:—but he must abide his fate! Small good have I done in saving him from the stroke of Hubbo, that would have ended him quickly as the lightning-flash, if he must, after all, be embowelled by the wolf or the wild boar. Didst thou look in the old oak, Rolf?—Try the hollow with thy lance;—he would climb like a wild cat to get out of our reach,—and yet, my life on't, he will find himself soon in worse hands."

" There is scarce room for a fox to creep in," answered Rolf, lifting his head from the hole.

" Rend open the bark then till there is width enough for a calf;" replied Sidroc, striking his spear against the sounding trunk. " Nay man —stand aside," continued he to Rolf, who was slowly, and piece by piece, tearing out the rotten bark,—" This work will keep us all night, if thou fumblest in that way."

Leaping from his horse as he pronounced these words, he retired a step or two backward; and then, advancing quickly, drove his right foot furiously against the side of the tree, and burst it in. A thick dust, which immediately fell from the shivered wood, prevented his making an ocular proof of the contents of the trunk; but, with his lance cautiously moved round in every direction, from the top of the hollow to the bottom, he satisfied himself that search there was useless. Looking then to the thick foliage on the top,— " There is room here, however," said he, " for a larger bird than this to make his nest in; though the ladder to it is somewhat of the weakest. Up with thee, Eadbald,—for thou art the

lightest and nimblest,—up—and see what sort of egg thou canst bring down in thy hand."

The soldier whom he addressed immediately dismounted, and began to climb, with hand and foot, by the slender shoots. The terror of the poor boy now became almost unbearable. Branch after branch he heard crack beneath the foot of the climber,—and bough after bough he saw bending beneath his gripe. The task, however, was no easy one; many a slip backward, and many a partial fall, as the branches broke beneath foot or hand, called forth smothered curses from the climber, and loud laughter from his comrades below. Shame to be foiled, and anger at being ridiculed, gave him, however, determination to persevere: and he would certainly have at length accomplished his purpose, had not Edmund himself, as the last childish resource,—when the branches immediately below him were, one by one, bowing down, and making his skreen of leaves every instant thinner and thinner,—conceived the hope of deterring him from farther search. The trick had once been practised upon himself by an elder boy,—and he had never forgotten it. Mak-

ing then with one hand a rustling amid the dead leaves that strewed the hollow in which he sate, he began to mimic the angry hiss of a snake when disturbed in his habitation,—and the stratagem was crowned with instant success. Uttering a cry of horror, Eadbald precipitately retreated, and almost tumbled, to the earth.

"Why what ails thee now?" said Sidroc, joining in the general laugh that burst forth at the singular rapidity of his descent, together with the terrified expression of his face, and the awkwardness of his gestures,—"Why what strange bird hast thou found brooding there, to make thee flutter thy chicken wings in this way?"

"He has seen a front tooth of the wolf Fenris," * cried Sigibert, laughing,—"and come down in haste to tell us that the monster has just devoured the sun,—for, look you, how fast the darkness draws upon us."

"No—no,"—cried Rolf,—"he has seen the great serpent Midgard † in an acorn shell, fight-

* Note I.

† For the great serpent Midgard, see the 27th Fable of the Edda.

ing with Thor mounted upon a pismire : no wonder the blood has left thy cheek Eadbald."

" I can soon paint it with a little of thine,"—cried Eadbald, turning fiercely upon the speaker, and laying his hand upon his sword.

" Silence this brawling !" cried Sidroc in an imperative tone,—" Silence ! and let us begone."

" If there be no great serpent Midgard in an acorn shell," continued Eadbald, " there is a reasonable knot of vipers that may serve your turn, Master Rolf, if you feel your courage troublesome to you : and a taste of their fangs may perhaps satisfy *you*, Master Sigibert, as well as a front tooth of the wolf Fenris—ay, or as even did the cold iron of a certain old Saxon, one fine summer's night that you wot of."

The person addressed had small relish for this last sarcasm, which had reference to an adventure in which he had come off rather awkwardly with the touch of a spear point in his shoulder. He accordingly started back, and unsheathed his sword, with denunciations of instant vengeance for the affront. Eadbald was as prompt in reply, and as quick in drawing his weapon : but

Sidroc, in a voice that made the wood ring, commanded them to forbear.

" Swords to the scabbard instantly !" cried he, lifting his spear, " or I will mar your striking for ever. Up with your steel ! By the thunder of God I will nail arm to side of him that dares to make the first stroke ! What brawling have we here among you,—and for what ! Palm to palm this instant,—and swear it shall be no quarrel for another day. Sigibert, you were the first to begin this,—be the first to hold out your hand."

" I mean't no harm," grumbled out the fellow, while he came forward to obey the command,— " and he has no right to be twitting me as he did about that cursed old Higbald,—whom Thor confound and blast for ever—with his rusted spit, that he poked after me, like a coward, as I was leaping through the ———"

" Say no more,—say no more,"—cried Eadbald, laughing, and extending his hand to that of the speaker, which he cordially shook,—" No need to tell us again what every body knows so well: and as you yourself are the surest not to forget it, why the less need to remind you of it : and so, Sigi-

bert, if you say nothing of the tumble from the tree, why I'll say as little of the leap out of the window; that's fair I trow.—And for you, Master Rolf, and your great serpent ———"

"Enough, enough!" cried Sidroc impatiently, "I can tarry no longer for this. But I am sorry to leave the poor lad in this desolate place; and he has had no food since the morning. Give me what provision you have in your wallet, Rolf;—and one of you cut down a sapling, and strip the leaves and shoots: we will plant it here in the open space, where he is most likely to see it if he should wander this way,—and tie the food to the top with ivy strings. 'Tis but a little goat's flesh and barley bread lost, at the worst: and, if the lad should not find it, why perhaps the limping old wolf may take it for his supper, in payment of the fright we gave him."

Rolf, accordingly,—for every northern soldier was expected to carry at his back provision sufficient for several days,—took from his wallet or knapsack, a quantity of goat's flesh and barley cake, more than enough for a day's supply to a stout man; and, having bound it round with the

broad leaves of the dock, and secured it by slender runners of honeysuckle to the pole which Eadbald had already fixed in the ground, mounted his horse, and cried out at the utmost pitch of his voice, "Soho! little monk—Soho—Wheresoever you may have taken your bed,—for your supper you must come here. Eat,—and God speed you: though I am afraid"—added he, lowering his voice, "that you are more likely to be eaten; unless the gentle rangers of the forest should have pre-engaged themselves to supper upon the smoked monks at Croyland and Peterborough: and, by the way, that is no such improbable chance neither."—

"Have done with your unmannerly jests," said Sidroc, "and let us away."

As he spoke this, a loud hoarse blast of the Danish war trumpet sounded through the wood.

"Hark!" he cried, "my brother's trumpet call. They are marching on, and we must linger no more here. Onward—but gently: we must spare our horses, for we have yet three hours riding, and may perhaps find other work upon the road. Foolish boy!" he added, speaking to himself,—"thou hast fled from a king who would

have been even as a father to thee; and may'st fall into the hands of a churl to whom thou wilt become a slave!—But the cup of which thou must drink is of thy own tempering. I offered thee honey, and thou hast chosen rather wormwood and gall.—Yet I know not why my heart should thus yearn toward thee, more than to thousands of others.—Thou art gone, and I must think no more of thee."

As he communed thus with himself, the Sea-king rode slowly after his men, casting around him in every direction a scrutinizing look as if he could not yet quite abandon all hope of discovering the fugitive.

But, if he felt sorrow at the loss of his captive, great indeed was the joy of the captive at his own release. With a breathless delight he beheld the horsemen, one after another, clear the wood, and descend the gentle declivity beyond it, till, gradually, horse and rider disappeared. Their lance points, waving round and round, in token to their comrades that they were on their way, was the last he saw of them. Sidroc remained on the verge of the forest a little while after the rest: and

Edmund observed that he cast one more survey upon the now fast darkening scene,—and, slightly inclining his head, appeared to listen with intentness, as if yet in hope that the last moment would bring to him some intimation of the object that he had till then sought for in vain.

His majestic figure, seated upon a powerful horse, magnified, and set in strong dark relief upon the evening sky, which shone brightly below the dense canopy of boughs, formed a picture which for years after remained fresh in the memory of the boy. There was a noble grandeur in that dark, silent, and stately form, as of some majestic shadow beheld in a dream. But Edmund did not *then* admire that which he afterwards so often recollected with an undefinable pleasure: and he awaited with eagerness the moment of his departure. He at length beheld the warrior wave his arm, as if silently bidding farewell,—and then ride slowly down the descent, and disappear.

The first impulse of the boy was to raise a shout of gladness; but he checked himself, for he feared that even yet he might be discovered. He had carefully counted every horseman as he

left the wood, and was assured that none remained behind: yet they *might* return,—they *might* have gone away only to entrap him from his hiding-place,—they might yet be lingering somewhere near, to pounce upon him as he came forth.

The voice of the Sea-king, at length, heard with distinctness, yet evidently at a considerable distance, and soon after replied to by others still feebler, and farther away, gave him a confidence that he was now finally abandoned by them, and that he might descend to pursue his way. He made his descent, nevertheless, with great caution,—stopping at every step to listen if any sound gave token of observer near: took at last a gentle leap to the earth; and, alighting among the fragments which had been broken from the trunk, displaced them so as to discover at his foot, which was slightly pained in the leap, an unsheathed dagger that, in the haste of his retreat, or rather fall, from the tree, had escaped unnoticed from the belt of Eadbald.

He had never been accustomed to the use of any weapon; but he caught it up with joy, as if it had been the hand of a friend held out to pro-

tect him. Wielding it with a sort of triumph in his right hand, he now thought himself secure from the wolves to whom Rolf had consigned him, and began to consider in which direction he should pursue his way. The road to Peterborough, which he had travelled in the morning, was near to him, and he could not there go astray: but then, the almost certain chance of meeting with parties of the Northmen going thither or returning,—and the absolute certainty of encountering them in the place itself, should he even reach it unharmed, were perils that he dared not confront. To follow upon the track of the enemy was, of course, out of the question; and, as no other beaten road had appeared to be near, he had no alternative but to walk in that course which led the most directly away from the track of the Northern army. He had, then, to attempt a passage through the wood, or to wind his way round its borders. What the extent of the wood might be, in breadth or in depth, he could not know: but he recollected that, as seen from the bridge at the time when he effected his escape, its width had appeared very considerable; and it

might therefore be a longer and harder task to skirt it on either hand, than to pierce directly through its centre. This last appeared to him to be also the safer course; for, though in the heart of the forest he might encounter the wolf, yet for such a foe he thought himself now prepared; but for the more terrible enemy whom he might meet in the outskirts of the wood, where probably,—for how could he know?—the windings of the road might bring it nearer to his path than even at the point where he now stood,—for such an enemy he knew too well his feebleness. To dive at once into the depth of the forest, and hold a course as direct as he could, was therefore his final determination.

He had not, certainly, arranged his thoughts quite so methodically as we have now presented them for him; and his boyish tongue, had he given utterance to his thoughts, would have clothed them in a boyish dress: the workings of his mind were, nevertheless, the same as if they had been set forth with all the pomp and formality that language could give them. Words *ought to be* as a mirror in which the true figure

of thought is reflected,—they *are* too often a coarse, or gawdy, drapery that distorts or conceals it. The modest child, who knows not what to say, may think and reason justly,—while the big-worded pompous speechifier, armed with learned authorities, loud, domineering, and vain, may be blundering in idiotic absurdities. This is, however, a little out of the way; though it may be as well for our younger readers not to forget it; and we leave it, therefore, for their especial use and comfort.

Before, however, he set forth upon his journey, a strong curiosity urged Edmund to go to the confines of the wood, and look out if perchance he might anywhere see his retiring pursuers. Walking therefore with great caution, and keeping a continual watch upon every bush around, lest an enemy should leap forth upon him, he reached at length the verge of the forest; and, having climbed a small eminence upon which stood one solitary elm tree, perceived the Huntingdon road lying for some miles before him. Winding along the brown heath, the chalky road looked like a long white serpent; but there

were large dark moving spots upon it; and on these the boy fixed his eyes. The western sky still glowed with the brightness of the departed sun, and occasional twinklings of dull light, reflected from some polished surfaces, made Edmund soon aware that these slowly moving spots were the rear of the Danish army. On the ascent of a gentle hill, less distant, he soon perceived other spots, but moving at a more rapid rate; and in these he had no difficulty to discover the horsemen who had been his pursuers. He could count their number as they rode loosely along; and, in the last dark figure, felt assured that he beheld the Sea-king Sidroc.

He had now sufficient calmness of mind to remember the lessons of his pious instructors; and, sinking on his knees, poured out a simple and fervent prayer to God, thanking Him for having so mercifully preserved him in so many dangers, and beseeching Him still to extend his almighty hand over him. Having done this, he arose, and prepared to begin his journey. He was, however, somewhat dismayed when, as he turned from the comparative light and cheerfulness of

the open sky, he beheld the contrasted darkness and gloom of the wood. Yet he would not now permit himself to deviate from his first intention: coming so freshly from the act of prayer, and the surrender of himself to the protection of God, it seemed to him like a mistrust of His goodness, or of His power, to dread what might happen. Resolutely then he went on, retreading his former steps till he had reached the oak, upon which he looked with a sentiment of love, that may be smiled at by some, but will be readily understood by those who have in themselves a fountain of kindly feeling sufficiently copious to permit a portion to overflow from self, and from man, upon objects which cannot feel, or make any profitable return to, their affection.

This emotion, however, was not of a quality so absorbing as to permit certain sensations in our little hero, to which he had hitherto paid no regard, from becoming gradually more and more urgent, and at length positively clamorous.

Our mental powers, our animal propensities, lie in a kind of uneasy slumber until the fitting cause presents itself, and bids them leap to action.

Napoleons, and Newtons, and Shakespears, many a one, have dragged on a feverish and restless life, tormented by an incessant craving after somewhat unknown ; and have gone at last to their graves, nameless and deedless, because the mental power and energy which ministers to ambition,—the intellectual sagacity which traces in a falling apple the principle that sustains worlds,—the comprehensive eye that sees relations amid the greatest opposites, differences amid things the most like,—have never been awakened and nourished in them by the circumstances which alone can give to those faculties impulse and scope. The material has been there, but the spark did not touch it,—or, if the blaze was, perchance, for a while kindled, there was no fuel gathered to support it, and it smouldered and went out. Passion, equally with intellectual power, lies dormant till stimulated to action; and, in opposition to certain philosophers whose reasons we do not choose to examine, we feel disposed to maintain, that, where appetite may not, in the present constitution of society, be indulged, it would be far wiser to suffer it to sleep

on, than to rouse it for the purpose of instructing the understanding how to keep it in subordination afterwards.

The awakening appetite, however, in our little hero, which has furnished the hint for this scrap of moral digression, was not of a nature to lead to any very serious evil;—it was, in short, the appetite for his supper. He had, since the moment of his escape, been much too anxiously engaged to think of food, or to attend to those sensations which, in the stomach of a healthy boy who had fasted from morning till nightfall, were so sure to be at work. He had felt uneasy, but had not known that he was hungry. The sight of the pole, however, whose purpose he quickly recalled,—and the small green packet upon its summit, instantly furnished the clue; and his stomach spoke out loudly and imperatively. A considerable portion of the barley cake and the goat's flesh was rapidly disposed of by the boy, sitting upon the ground, and mentally thanking the kind hand that had supplied it: the remainder was reserved for future need; and, having briefly returned thanks to God who had moved

the heart of the fierce warrior to provide for him thus, he rose from the earth, and looked around to see in what direction he should commence his journey.

His wish was to return to Croyland, and to find out some of the monks who had concealed themselves in its vicinity. It would, he knew, be a dreadful thing to him to behold the ruins of the stately building, and the sorrowful remnant of its simple and pious inhabitants;—but where else could he go? to whom but those could he be known? of whom but of them could he expect sympathy and aid? According to the best of his conjecture, Croyland must be situated beyond the forest, and a little to its northern extremity. He had watched where the sun had gone down,—and had beheld the first twinkling of certain stars often noticed by him while walking in the quiet gardens of the monastery; and by these he thought he might guess the direction in which it lay. His premises were unsafe, but his conjecture was right: and he wanted nothing but strength, perseverance, and daylight, to have succeeded in his attempt.

It was now, however, becoming so rapidly

dark, that, after walking some fifty yards, and stumbling at every third or fourth step, he felt convinced of the impossibility of proceeding. It occurred to him at the same time that, in the space of an hour or two, the moon would be up: and that it would then be much better, and safer, for him to travel; that he might even get sooner to the end of his journey by resting a few hours till the light should arise to guide him, than by toiling on in the darkness which might lead him far astray. He had no sooner thought of this than his limbs expressed an unusual aversion to farther labour for the present; and his eyelids told him plainly that they anxiously desired to do their most important office. Probably, though he yet grasped the dagger in his hand, the distant howl of a wolf might have added a hint to comply with these suggestions of his corporal powers, though this he would not acknowledge to himself. Backward, however, he went; and once more, though with far greater difficulty, scrambling into his oaken refuge, bedded himself among the dried leaves, put up a short prayer for protection in the night, and fell almost immediately into a heavy sleep.

CHAPTER V.

His leafy covering was not of sufficient warmth to allow our little hero a long repose; and, after dreaming for a while of bitter cold winds, and fireless cloisters, and heavy snow-storms; of losing his cloak, and breaking into the ice, and shivering home in his frosted coat,—he awoke, and found himself stiff, cold, and trembling. But it was not instantly that he recollected his situation; and his first matter of surprise was, how his bedclothes could have fallen off in such a way,—and how it was that the moonshine came in at his window, since he had no recollection that it had done so before. A grasp at the light and loose leaves however, which he laid hold of with the intention of drawing the warm clothes over him, soon awoke, and reminded him of his situation.

The hideous tragedies that he had beheld, and which kind sleep had for a few hours ba-

nished from his thoughts, came then again, with an oppressive torment, upon him. But he was, at all events, freed from his captivity, and that was some consolation: yet, again, he had a long and dangerous journey before him, and that was cause of anxious doubt. He turned, however, once more in his leafy bed, that he might at once impart warmth to the colder side of his body, and think over the measures that he ought to take.

A rustling noise upon the ground near the tree soon caught his ear; and he looked down, —assuring himself at the same time that his dagger was secure in his bosom. The moonshine streaked and dappled the floor of dew spangled moss and fine grass with sufficient brightness to make objects tolerably distinct. His weapon was, however, not required in the present emergency; the apprehended enemy below being nothing more than a hedgehog, which, with its short wriggling snout, appeared to be making acquaintance with the crumbs that had fallen from his supper table.

A quick, soft, trampling that Edmund now

heard, occasioned the prickly marauder to decamp; and the new comer proved to be a fox, who, after beating about a while with his nose to the ground, seemed desirous to be informed of the purpose of the said supper pole, and of what might be, or might have been, attached to its top. Rearing up, therefore, on his hind legs, and planting his fore-paws against it, as he continued his snuffing researches, he at last bore it to the ground; and, alarmed at the noise and the fall, set off at a brisk pace, turning back his head every now and then, as if he expected a pursuit.

Had not his feelings been so dreadfully lacerated by the atrocities which he had beheld, and his thoughts been wholly occupied by the perils which he had yet to encounter, the novelty and wildness of the situation in which he found himself would, to a mind romantic as Edmund's, have been pregnant with delightful feeling. Even as it was, he could not forbear a faint smile at the hasty retreat of the poor fox; and then, arranging his leafy coverlet as well as he might for procuring the utmost warmth that it could afford him, again lay down, and watched the

moon as she appeared to sail through the light and slowly moving clouds.

He looked at the moon,—but he saw the venerable abbot at the altar, and the demon that slew him there;—he beheld the wretched man again rise into the air, and sink below the quagmire,—and his piercing shriek again rang in his ear. A delicately tinted cloud, that melted as it passed over the bright orb, drew his pleased eye,—but the golden-locked queen was in his mental vision, and the pale-cheeked Windreda. The flames of the stately monastery of Peterborough rose then before him, as he had beheld them at night from the camp. He saw again the hurry at the bridge,—and again ran his own desperate race. A black cloud passed slowly across the moon,—he beheld the tall dark figure of Sidroc, silently standing on the forest verge, and waving adieu. The oak boughs rustled gently with the breeze,—and he again heard the decayed bark torn away by Rolf,—and the crash, as it burst in before the stamp of Sidroc,—and again he listened to the foot of the climber as he drew upward to his hiding-place.

He recollected himself here; and strove to shake off the painful feeling: but it seemed to him as if the sound that had last haunted him was not altogether imaginary. There was no rending or bursting of the bark,—but there was a slight scratching, that sent through the thin hollow trunk a dull vibration. It might, he thought, be a squirrel in the hollow,—or perhaps a wild cat, clambering outside. With the gentlest motion that he could, he drew out his dagger, and looked through the openings of the leaves. He saw at first nothing; but a quick, soft, panting directed his ear nearer to the foot of the tree; and he beheld, lying directly below him, a huge wolf, whose red paws, which he was cleansing with his tongue, showed that he had just come from the slaughter. The motion in the tree had probably attracted the notice of the animal; for he soon rose; and, rearing his fore-legs against the tree, seemed, by the snuffing of his nostrils, and the pricking up of his ears, to be inquiring what could have caused it. Edmund, however, remained perfectly still; and his unwelcome visitor soon returned to his couch at the foot.

A howl at a great distance now sounded faintly through the wood; and the wolf, having listened awhile with erected ears, arose,—and, gazing at the moon, set up a long, loud, and hideous yell in reply, to which the echoes all around spake again, as from the throats of an advancing pack. The sight of this monster, with his low hung throat and distended jaws, and the horrible music that issued from them, made our little Saxon rejoice that he was not then upon his road, with the chance of such a companion; and his dagger appeared to him, all at once, a much less formidable weapon than before.

But the wolf was destined to remain upon the scene as briefly as the hedgehog and the fox;—for, scarcely had the echoes ceased to answer his howl, when the deep-toned barking of two dogs, at no great distance, appeared to him a sufficient notice to quit the spot; which he did at a brisk gallop, looking behind him alternately to either side as he ran.

His departure was by no means displeasing to Edmund; yet he felt no inclination to exchange his bed—chilly as it was—for motion and warmth

which might be purchased at too dear a rate. The barking of the dogs, also, which had freed him from one enemy, might announce the approach of others, as little to his liking. Danish soldiers, or Saxon robbers, might be abroad, and their swords would be quite as disagreeable to him as the fangs of the wolf. Carefully nestling down again, therefore, in his bed, he resolved to await there the return of day, when he might hope to pursue his journey untroubled.

He had not, however, lain long, when a distant voice, as of a man praying aloud, startled him; and again he rose in an agitation which made his heart throb with violence. There was something in the place, the hour, and the tone of the voice that produced upon him the effect of a supernatural visitation, and made his flesh to creep, and his hair to stand up. He looked forth, but saw nothing. The voice ceased not, and appeared slowly, and gradually approaching. It was deep, and energetic, and of a wild and solemn intonation, as of one who pleaded strenuously, and perhaps over-boldly, with Heaven.

Edmund had heard of madmen who lived in

the caves and forests,—and of saints who had risen from the grave to walk the earth, and give warning to men of evil days coming upon them, —and of druids that still existed in the unfrequented solitudes, and offered up human sacrifices to their horrible gods;—and, as the still swelling voice drew nigher, his fancy was busy with dreadful shapes, and maniacal contortions, and appalling aspects of death. The first few words that became distinctly audible abated, however, the extremity of his terrors; and proved to him that his visitor was neither pagan, nor madman, nor spectre.

"The black waters are come over us, Oh God!" said the yet unseen speaker,—"the waters of bitterness and of death! Thou hast made us drink of gall, and of wormwood, and of blood: and our hearts are burned up within us at the fire of thy wrath! Wherefore, oh God! hast thou sent this plague upon the land,—and wherefore hath thy right hand scourged us, as with whips of scorpions?—How hath the tender infant sinned against thee,—and the babe that lieth upon its mother's breast,—and the child

unborn,—that the fierce hands of the wicked men should be laid upon them, and that the sword of the unbeliever should smite them? Wilt thou not hearken to our prayers, oh God? Wilt thou forever turn the deaf ear unto the cries of our agony?"

As he proceeded in this strain, the speaker became gradually visible to the searching and anxious eye of Edmund. His walk was slow, and unsteady; his hands,—now outstretched, and now pressed together,—betokened the painful struggle of his soul; and his face was for ever lifted to heaven, as though he beheld with bodily eye the awful Being whom he addressed.

Close behind him walked the two dogs whose deep voices had scared the wolf, and almost equally alarmed the little fugitive in the tree. They were of that large, and now extinct, breed, with which the enormous elk, the wolf, the bear, and the wild boar, were chased and destroyed. With long, slow stride, and head depressed, as if influenced by the solemn feeling of their master, they silently followed his steps.

As he drew nearer, Edmund had light suffi-

cient to note distinctly the appearance of the man. Upon his head he had a dark helmet of iron; a cloak, or mantle, secured in front at the neck, covered his back, but left at liberty his arms, upon which, and upon his body, he wore a dark mail of twisted wire, reaching to the knee: his legs were defended by a sort of buskin, or loose boot, of untanned hide;—a long, straight, and broad, sword was suspended from his shoulder, and in his right hand he carried a spear. His stature was beyond the usual height; and his air, and deportment, though strange, if not wild, had in them a character of grandeur. He intermitted not his mingled prayer and expostulation as he came on.

"When wilt thou arm thee with thy thunder, oh God? When wilt thou shoot the fiery arrows of thy wrath upon them who make of thee their mock,—and who trample upon thy cross, —and who pour out like water the blood of thy saints? When wilt thou smite the scaly dragon, and fling his bones into Tophet? Shall the heathen still boast that his god is mightier than Thou? Shall he still mock at us, and demand,

‘ where is your God,—what is his strength,—and wherefore doth he not gird on his armour and fight for you?’ Turn not thy face longer from us, Almighty Father! hear our prayers, and deliver us from this great evil that hath come upon us! Hear the groans of the martyrs,—and the cries of the weak women and infants,—and the supplications of all them who have no trust but in thee; for the arm of the strong is withered,—and his loins are unloosed,—and his knees shake before the terrible destroyer!”

As he concluded these words, he reached the open spot near to the oak, and stopped,—apparently as if his attention was excited by the marks of horse hoofs, and the fallen pole. In a lower, and very different, tone of voice, he then went on.

“ Ay—here have they been. The red hand has perhaps here smitten the victim; and the wolf may have dragged away the carcase to his den.”

The movements of the dogs now appeared to draw his attention; for he remained silent

and motionless, resting his right hand upon his spear.

The keen scent of the hounds had instantly informed them that other animals had lately been on the spot; but, after awhile, their upward pointed noses, erected ears, and snuffing nostrils, indicated that they had sense of the presence of somewhat still in the tree; and this did not escape the notice of their master, who fixed his eye upon it, and appeared to be awaiting their further proceedings.

Edmund had been for some time revolving in his mind the propriety of making himself known to the stranger; but there was a lurking suspicion of some deceit intended towards him, which held him undetermined what to do. He even thought, at first, that this might be Sidroc himself, disguised thus, and assuming the character of a Christian sufferer, for the purpose of luring him from his hiding-place. A nearer view, however, had soon satisfied him that the figure wanted something of the height, and a great deal of the strength and size of limb, which belonged to the Swedish warrior. His voice was deep as

Sidroc's, but of a different, and less commanding, tone. His face also, as he drew still nigher, was more pale; and, though somewhat inclined to the oval form like his, far thinner, and apparently more marked with years. These were differences which could not be assumed; and Edmund felt, therefore, an assurance that in this first suspicion he had been mistaken. But distrust is fruitful in invention; and so many possibilities of danger to ensue, from discovering himself to a person coming under appearances so singular, thronged into his mind, that most likely, had the decision rested wholly with himself,—or had he not been the first solicited to appear,—he would have preferred remaining in his concealment. The loud baying of the dogs, however, had at length assured the stranger of the presence of something in the tree; and, as they were not wont to chase any animal likely to have climbed there,—with the exception of the bear, at that time rarely met with, and which, moreover, could not have clambered by branches, or rather shoots, so slender as those which grew from the trunk,—the conclusion immediately drawn by the stran-

ger was, of course, that the unseen tenant of the tree must be of the human species. Such was indeed, as his words showed, the game which he had in present chase. After silencing his dogs, who, however, showed frequent inclination to join in the colloquy, he proceeded to address the invisible occupier of the green mansion above him.

"Whosoever you are," said he, in a low but distinct voice, "that have sought refuge here, speak to me, and fear not. If you have wandered from your way, haply I may direct your feet aright: if you are a fugitive, and weak, I may comfort and strengthen you."

He paused,—but there was as yet no answer.

"If you are one of the oppressed Saxon people, I am also one of such; and will give you aid as unto a brother. If you are even of the race of the destroyer, and have fled from the stronger arm, and are in need, and in peril, and in fear, I will yet remember that you are a man, and will administer comfort to your wants, and pour into your bosom, if you will accept of it,

the precious balsam that shall be rich unto salvation."

These words, and the tone of true Christian charity with which they were uttered, banished from the boy all fear; and he immediately stood up to reply.

The sound of his rising, and of his voice, drew forth from the impatient hounds a sudden and furious barking which caused him to pause.

"Down Balder! down Huald!" cried the stranger, enforcing the command by a stamp of the foot, and a slight touch of the spear handle, which imposed instant silence upon the deep-mouthed orators; and, with the exception of a suppressed growl at intervals, preserved them in perfect neutrality during the conference.

"Go on now," continued he, looking up to the speaker, "whomsoever you are; for I am impatient to hear."

"I am a poor boy"—replied Edmund; "and have escaped from the Northmen, who took me from the monastery of Croyland."

"Come down! come down, my child!"—exclaimed the stranger, "come down instantly,

and let me take thee in my arms, and carry thee to my habitation, and give thee food and warmth. Hasten down, my child,—yet heedfully, for thy limbs must be stiff, and cold, and faint."

Edmund was already descending; but paused a moment, and looked down. "The dogs"—said he.

"They will not hurt thee, my poor boy"—replied the stranger, holding, however, at the same time his lance over them, and warning them to keep aloof; "they will do thee no harm. Heed lest the twigs break with thy weight.—No,—tread not there, for the branch is already broken,—upon the shoot beneath it—now—turn and leap into my arms. Poor child!" continued he, as the boy surrendered himself to his uplifted hands, and safely alighted on his bosom,—"and was it thee whom the northern blood hounds were pursuing through the wood with shout, and halloo, and trampling of horse?"

"Yes"—answered Edmund, "and I hid myself in the tree till they went away,—and I have been there all the night, for it grew dark, and

I did not know the way, and I was tired and sleepy ;—and there came a wolf under the tree."

" But there is yet much of the night to run," said the stranger ; " and thou shalt lie in a warmer bed than thou hast had here, and refresh thy chilled and wearied limbs. Canst thou walk ? for better it were for thee to warm thy blood with motion of limb, though wearisome and painful at the first, than,——"

" Yes, oh yes,"—replied the boy, striving to disengage himself that he might set his feet upon the ground,—" I can walk, and run too : I have not been *very* cold,—and I shall be so pleased to go along with you, that I shall not mind a little pain,—besides it will soon go off. See—I can walk very well indeed."

Accompanying the word with the action, he took a few rather painful steps to and fro ; but paused, and stood close to the stranger, when he saw the two huge dogs advancing with curious noses to make a closer acquaintance with him. A little patting upon the head, however, and the pronouncing of their names a few times, in obedience to the instruction of their master,

soon familiarized them sufficiently to make them press against him, and lick his hands, and even condescend to cover the whole of his face at once with the stroke of their large tongues. This extremity of love he did not, however, desire that they should exhibit a second time.

"Their names," said the stranger again, "are Huald and Balder; and me you may call Theodric. But tell me now, as we go on to my humble dwelling,—for we have yet an hour's walk before us,—of this great calamity which has come upon the pious fraternity of Croyland. Somewhat, but all imperfect, I have this day heard from one who passed me in the wood, and who himself had learned nought save rumours. Tell me also thy name, and the manner of thy escape from the hands of the fierce enemy."

As well as he could,—but not without many bitter tears as the recital called freshly before him the dreadful occurrences,—Edmund detailed to the kind inquirer all which he had himself witnessed, and such general information of facts subsequent to his removal from the monastery as he had heard from others. Of the catastrophe

at Peterborough he had seen nothing,—but much had come to his knowledge. Of this, however, Theodric appeared to be equally well informed with himself. His own escape from the Northmen closed his relation: and all was heard by Theodric with deep sympathy, and frequent bursts of indignation, and kind condolements with the grief of the narrator.

Their path had hitherto been devious, but never of such difficulty as to interrupt the recital. A hollow occasionally,—and twice a shallow brook, partly in obscurity, and in parts twinkling freshly to the moonlight,—and once a huge fallen tree over which they had to clamber,—having been all the impediments. As Edmund concluded, they found themselves in a spot somewhat wilder in appearance than those parts through which they had hitherto passed. A steep declivity, at the bottom of which a rapid, but unseen, brook brawled and wrangled with the stones of its channel, was at their right hand, and at the left a low rocky hill, from whose fissures the wild ash, and the stunted birch, and the oaken sapling, projected. Thickly matted

ivy clung here and there to its sides; and a profusion of mingled plants covered such shelvings of the rock as contained any portion of soil.

"Pause a moment here, my child," said Theodric, "and tell me if aught around you speaks of the habitation of man. You have known what it is to be expelled from a peaceful home; and you have lost those who were very dear to you: but you have not yet endured the sharpest misery: you have not lost worldly estate,—a princely mansion, endeared to you by long years of happiness, and fondly looked upon as the spot where your declining age might glide by in ease and security, and where you might at last close your eyes, surrounded by those whom you loved, and by whom you were beloved;—you have not lost wife, and children by the bloody hand;—*I* have lost all. The spoiler came in the night,—the ruthless, the destroying Bacseg, with his tiger horde. They slew every living creature within my walls. I was not with them; and could not have given them help. With two servants alone, and these my faithful dogs, I was then journeying to the court of the timorous and faithless

Burrhed. I had with me gold and jewels; and my purpose was to devote my wealth to the service of my country, and to rouse the wavering king to manly resistance against the invader. Rumours of the horrid deed reached me on the second day; and my gallant horse fell dead as he brought me back ere night to the yet blazing mansion. I gathered together burnt bodies, whose features I could not recognize,—and buried them in one grave. Madness came over me, and I fled,—whither I knew not, nor know. One faithful servant, however, watched over me. It was in this spot,—reposing beneath the shade of this elm,—that I first became conscious of returning reason; and in this dell was, for months afterwards, my habitation. But I must not dwell upon the past, or frenzy will again seize me. Look," said he, leading the distressed and alarmed boy round a huge bush of holly which had hitherto concealed it, and showing him a narrow cleft in the rock,—" Here was my abode: here I passed weeks of unconscious madness, which are a blank in my existence,—and months of bitter misery that I must die to forget."

Leading the way through the low entrance, he took Edmund into a roomy cave, dimly lighted by the moon from a fissure above. The floor was dry sand rock; the roof was high and narrow, as if formed by the junction of two rocks that had fallen against each other; and the farther extremity of the cave was invisible amid the darkness.

"Here,"—continued Theodric, pointing to one side, "was my bed,—and here"—touching with his lance point a low piece of projecting rock in the centre, "was for a time my table. My faithful Berthfrid knew not that I had yet wealth concealed in my garments; and had moved the charity of such poor persons as he could find in the neighbourhood to supply me, during my state of unconsciousness, with the necessaries of life. The gold which, on my return to reason, I was able to supply him with, soon procured us comforts; and in a short time,—for I dared not go back to that world where I should find a more bitter solitude,—in this wilderness arose the humble habitation in which we have since dwelt,

and where you shall now, my poor child, find a refuge."

Taking Edmund by the hand as he pronounced these words, he led him from the cave, and walked on with a speed that he had not hitherto put forth.

After a short time they came to an open space of about an acre and a-half, surrounded by wood, at the opposite side of which stood a low and rather long house, having before it, and on either side, portions of cultivated ground, stocked with green plants of various kinds. The construction and the materials of the place were not likely to excite curiosity in the wearied boy, who, having, with his conductor, entered at a door behind, found himself in a room of tolerable size, warmed by the slumbering embers of a wood fire. The faithful servant, and one female domestic, a woman rather in years, were speedily aroused; warm food was prepared for the unexpected little guest, and a bed was arranged for him, upon which he soon after stretched his tired limbs, and fell into a profound sleep.

The sun was in mid heaven when he awoke,

and looked with astonishment upon all around him, very imperfectly at first, and as a dream, recollecting the events of the preceding night, and the circumstances under which he had arrived at his present abode. All soon, however, came clearly to his memory. He arose, and dressed himself, and, drawing aside a small curtain of woollen cloth which formed its sole defence against the weather, looked out at his window of chequered lath. The first object that he beheld was his kind conductor, walking slowly to and fro upon a path in his rustic garden, and apparently in solemn, and painful meditation. He went forth immediately to him, and offered his artless thanks for the kindness he had shewn to him, and begged permission to resume his journey toward the monastery. The faint smile which had illuminated the face of Theodric at the first appearance of the boy, soon passed, and a deep gloom took its place.

"I would gladly," said he to Edmund, in a solemn tone, "have bid thee remain, and pass thy days with me here in safety,—but, I know not: haply the society of man, and of youthful com-

panions, may be necessary to one like thee, not yet wearied of existence. Perchance, also, the evil may not have been so great as thou hast feared, or heard. Of the fraternity, and of thy young friends, many may still live, whom thou hast supposed to have perished. The way is not long,—I will myself go with thee, and protect thee: and, if thou canst no longer find refuge there, hither, at least, thou mayst return with me, and abide till better days shall invite thee to go forth into the world. And *I*,"—continued he, with the tone of one who utters unconsciously his thougths,—" could I but find labourers willing to toil with me, and to lay down life in the good work,—*I* would also go forth again, and stand in the battle for our country and for our religion. But I must wait the hour, and the summons." Then again addressing the boy, " To-day, my child," said he, " remain with me,—for the morn is passed, and thy feet could not, before the coming of night, bear thee through thy journey. Horse, or ass, have I none to bear thee; nor without a guide, would the morasses be safe for such. Take thy food then, and make to

thyself for the day such amusement as thou canst find. On the morrow early we will depart. I ask thee not to share the hours till night with me, for a darkness is upon my soul, and I would not sadden thy spirits by the sight of my misery. I must retire to solitude, and the silence of the deep forest. May the grace of God be upon thee!"

So saying, he kissed the cheek of the speechless boy, and was soon lost to sight in the darkness of the wood.

Edmund was almost as cheerless as his unhappy protector. He was too sorrowful to hold much talk with the domestics, who with great kindness presented him his food: the gambols of the huge dogs soon ceased to please him: and the work of damming up with mud the small stream which overflowed from the spring that supplied the house with water, speedily became irksome to him. He was glad when night summoned him to rest; and more so when, at sunrise of the next day, Theodric affectionately awaked him, that they might begin their journey towards his beloved island.

In addition to his former arms, Theodric now slung upon his back a bow, and a well furnished quiver; and the trusty dogs were allowed to accompany them, both as a defence, in case of attack, and that their instinct might assist them to find the safer crossings through the dangerous morasses.

After having halted for rest and food in a cottage near the extremity of the wood, the inmates of which were known to Theodric, they again set forth; and, while it was yet early in the afternoon, found themselves within sight of the monastery; and perceived immediately that the fire was not yet quite extinguished. Great portion of the building was wholly destroyed, and lay a smoking ruin upon the ground. Much, however, was yet standing; and, by the motion of the human figures about it, they gathered that attempts to prevent the spreading of the flames were still actively pursued. Gladly would they have hastened to contribute their little aid; but the most dangerous part of their road lay now before them, and demanded the utmost circumspection. The dogs served as their pilots; but the lance

point was, not the less, used to prove every step where danger threatened. Edmund trod securely in the foosteps of his conductor, and they at length, though much fatigued, stood in safety upon the firm land, and within a short distance of the building.

On every other side but this, the misnamed island was actually surrounded with water; and, on occasion of heavy rains and floods, was completely so. Our travellers had frequently cast an onward look toward the figures around the monastery, whom they could not at the first distinguish, and who might consequently have proved, after all, to be such as they would have declined to encounter. But they had long been aware that they were really monks, though not employed, as they had supposed, in extinguishing the fire.

The appearance of a tall armed man, threading their morasses, had inspired a momentary suspicion in the minds of the monks also; and yet they instantly recollected that it was not from that quarter they had so recently found themselves assailable. All were, however, too

actively engaged to think much upon it: but the voice of Edmund, calling out with delight the name of each as he appeared, soon reached them: and a cry of joyful recognition hailed his return.

To keep his former pace with his conductor was now impossible: and he ran eagerly and threw himself into the arms of the first whom he approached, and of all in succession, overpowered with transports of delight. Bursts of grief as uncontrollable, however, soon followed, when he missed among them so many who had been equally, or more dear, to his heart, and when he thought upon the horrors that had passed since he last parted from them. The monks were equally affected, and tears rolled down their cheeks.

Theodric, during the interchange of these sorrowful greetings, sat upon the root of an aged tree, beholding, and unwilling to interrupt them. By Edmund he was, in truth, for the time entirely forgotten: but a question from one of the monks recalled his benefactor to his thoughts, and covered his face with a momentary blush for self-imputed ingratitude.

"Oh! he is my kind friend and preserver!" said he in reply to the inquiry, "he saved me, and sheltered me, and came with me to protect me: and he is very unhappy, for his wife and children, and servants, were all killed by the horrid Northmen: and his house was burned—and he went distracted,—and fled into the woods,—and lived in a cave;—but I must not tell you all now,—pray invite him in and make him welcome, as he made me when I was cold and stiff, and hiding in the wood."

Several of the monks now moved toward Theodric; and Edmund accompanied them. They greeted him with respect, and kindness, and unfeigned thanks; and begged that, of such poor comforts as still remained to them, he would condescend to partake.

"Our provisions"—said father Ceolric, the chief spokesman among them, "are such as in haste we have been able to procure, and perhaps ill suited to a palate daintily nurtured; yet the coarse food, seasoned with a cordial welcome, and accepted in kindness, is sweeter than a banquet at the table of the proud. Enter, however,

and partake of the best that we can set before you: and in what our means fall short, let our good will, and your own indulgence, serve for our excuse."

While Theodric was preparing to reply, a sudden exclamation from Edmund, who was walking apart with one of the monks, announced that he had just heard some pleasing intelligence. In a moment he turned to Theodric, with gladness beaming in his face, and, clapping his hands, cried out "joy! joy! my dear father Cynewulf, whom I told you of, is alive, and well,—Oh! I must run to him,—joy! joy!" And, without saying more, or staying for answer or permission, away he ran.

He was, however, recalled by the monk, who told him that father Cynewulf was engaged in the burial ground, and would presently come to him. At that moment two monks issued from the wicket of the southern gate; and Edmund saw, at the first glance, that they were Cynewulf and Osbald. With a cry of delight, he sprang forward: and, in a few moments, was in the arms

of him whom he believed to be his father, and whom he loved with the affection of a child.

"It is our good brother Cynewulf," said a monk, in answer to a question from Theodric, "who brought the child to the monastery while he was yet but an infant; and whom the boy has been wont to call father: but of his true parents we know nothing, save that, as our brother has informed us, they were of rank, and, in some way, unfortunate. Our brother was in the last fatal battle when the Earl Algar, and almost every man with him, perished; and till yesterday we mourned him as dead. He had fallen upon the field, exhausted and swooning; but night was even then descending; and he soon arose unseen, and crawled into the woods, where, for three days, he remained, hungered and feeble."

During this explanation Theodric stood still, and looked upon the interview betwixt the affectionate boy and his supposed parent, who, after exchanging a few words, advanced to greet the stranger. Father Cynewulf appeared about the age of forty: he was rather above than

below the middle height, and of a form that indicated strength and activity. His countenance was now pale and shaded with deep gloom; but had an expression of keen intellect, and appeared to be such as, in happier moments, might have been deemed handsome. His whole appearance and manner was that of one accustomed to the society of men in the higher ranks. With a solemn, deep, and mellow voice, as he extended to Theodric his hands, he expressed his thanks for the kind protection shown to Edmund, and bade him welcome to their now poor and ruinous abode.

"Your bed, courteous Sir," said he, "will be hard, and your food coarse: yet accept the best that we can offer you. Our society, also, will, I fear, be cheerless to you, for our hearts are oppressed with sorrow, and our labour is now very grievous unto us. For three days the brethren have toiled to recover from the ruins the mutilated, and half-consumed bodies of our unhappy elders, and young children, who fell beneath the swords of the barbarians; and this night we are about to commit them to the grave.

Forgive us then if the hospitality due to the preserver of one of the dearest lambs in our flock should appear less cheerful than our gratitude would prompt."

The mention of the impending ceremony awoke in Theodric feelings and recollections which he had strenuously endeavoured to banish from his mind; and effectually decided any wavering thoughts which he had entertained of passing one night at least beneath the roof of the monastery. The monk remarked the sudden, but slight, start with which he heard of the approaching burial,—the wild, though momentary, flash of his eyes,—the instant paleness of his cheek, and the thrill of horror expressed by the breath hastily drawn in through his closed teeth,—but he could not be aware of the cause for so sudden and powerful an emotion. He saw, however, that the feeling was most painful; and forbore to excite it afresh by any allusion to it. After a moment's pause, Theodric, with a tremulous voice replied.

"That which I have done, reverend father," said he, "for this poor boy, deserves no greater

thanks than the proffer of your hospitality,—which the time permits me not to accept,—will suffice to repay. In the house of mourning, even the welcomed guest is but an intruder. My bed awaits me in the cottage beyond the morass; and of food I have still with me, and to spare. The sun is yet high; and the foot prints that I left in my coming will remain to direct my return. One thing only would I crave to ask of you. Where the wolf has once feasted, there will he return to find new prey, or to gnaw the bones from which he has before torn the flesh. Should the spoiler again be coming upon you, let the boy find shelter under the roof that has once covered him. I have lost all that was dear to me in life, and my heart yearns toward him. Let him then be conducted to the cottage beyond the swamp, and he will there find a safe guide to the abode of Theodric, where he may, haply, enjoy the security here denied him."

"Courteous Sir,"—replied the monk, "I receive with gratitude your offer, and, if,—which Heaven forbid!—occasion should demand it,

cheerfully will entrust to your hands the treasure that you have once found and restored to us. May the grace of God be with you! and may the wounds that His hand hath inflicted upon you be speedily healed by the balm which He alone can pour into them! Evil indeed are the days upon which we are fallen; and, for the weight of his own sorrow, no man knoweth how to speak to his fellow the words of comfort!"

He pressed the hands of Theodric as he concluded, and again bade God speed him. After a short and affectionate embrace, Theodric parted from the boy; and, with a quick step, commenced his return.

It was not without tears that Edmund saw him depart: and, when Cynewulf reminded him that he ought to enter and take food, he requested permission to remain where he was, that he might watch the steps of his kind protector till he had passed the marsh.

"Stay then, my son,"—said the pleased monk; "lift up thy prayers for his safety; and pour out thy thanks to Him who gave thee, in the time of thy distress, a help so needful. I will send

food to thee here,—and such of thy young companions as are returned to us. With joy will they welcome thee, whom we thought lost; and thou mayst tell to them the dangers thou hast escaped, and hear from them the tale of their own distresses. I also would gladly know of thy hardships and escape,—but we have now a solemn work to do, and I must join in the devotions of the brethren, that our hearts may be prepared for the awful duty. For to-night farewell, my beloved child. In the morning shalt thou tell, in the presence of our new abbot and the brethren, all which thou hast seen and suffered. Blessed be God for his mercy to thee my son!"

So saying, he kissed the cheek of the boy, and returned to the monastery.

In a short time, six young children, all that had yet returned of those who fled at the approach of the Northmen, came running from the door; and, in turn, embraced and welcomed their companion. While they sat round him listening with amazement and horror to the story of his adventures, his own eye was continually directed to the lessening form of the solitary traveller over

the dangerous swamp. The two noble dogs still preceded him, diminishing gradually in the distance to the size of mice: and, with a glad heart, the grateful boy at length beheld that all had passed in safety, and were ascending a gentle eminence, crowned by the thick wood, which now glowed with a golden light in the beams of the setting sun. In a short time they gained the summit, and appeared to make a pause: but the sun was in the act of sinking: and, when his last tinge had departed from the forest, they were no longer visible.

At this moment a solemn dirge that proceeded from the burial ground, where the monks were performing the last melancholy duty over the bodies of their murdered brethren, came to their ears; and, in awe struck silence, broken only by deep sobs, the children, walking two by two, slowly entered the monastery, and, ascending to their dormitory, as they had been directed, soon wept themselves to sleep.

A mournful week dragged heavily along over the inmates of the monastery; and the spirits of Edmund appeared daily more and more depres-

sed. He was continually seeking solitude, that he might give vent to his distress unseen: his food was no longer palatable to him; and his cheek became wan and hollow. Cynewulf marked the gloom upon his beloved child, and strove, but in vain, to comfort him. Another week elapsed; and a slow fever was evidently consuming the strength of the little sufferer. The monastery, that he had once so loved, became as a frightful tomb to him. His days were passed in tears, and his nights in horrible dreams. His little companions could not cheer him; and the religious consolations which were administered to him by the brethren had now no comfort for him. Day by day he sickened and waxed feeble: and the only words that shot a brief radiance over his face were when Cynewulf at length intimated to him his intention to remove with him from the monastery.

"My dear boy,"—said the kind monk to him, one day when they had returned from the service of the morning, and were walking alone in the garden, "this is, I see, no longer a home for you: I have taken counsel with the reverend

abbot and the brethren; and, by the blessing of God, we will depart from this place, and seek in a more quiet country, and a more salubrious climate, the peace and the health which we can no longer hope for you here. In the beautiful and quiet vales of Somerset, you will perhaps forget the miseries which, in this unhappy spot, would continue to haunt you. Thither then will we go; and, in the little convent of Cothelstone,—where the days of my noviciate were passed, and where my brother still holds, I trust, the seat which for ten years he has worthily filled,—shall we find a home, and a cordial welcome. There we need not fear the cruel Northmen; for the anger of Wessex, which they have once felt, they will still dread to provoke. Dry your tears therefore, my beloved child, and take food that you may have strength to begin your journey on the morrow. I have provided horses, and shall to-day complete my preparations for the way."

"But the good Theodric,"—said Edmund, while his eyes brightened with pleasure, "will he not go with us? May I not, at least, bid him farewell?"—

"His dwelling"—replied the monk, "is, I believe, not far from our way; we will see him, and hear his determination. Ever thus let thy heart be grateful, my dear child, to thy benefactors; for a thankless mind is displeasing to Him who is the Great Benefactor of all, both when He gives, and when He takes away. Go now to your companions; and let your last day with them be one of love, and gentle cheerfulness. Haply those from whom to-morrow you will part, you may never see again. I must now hasten to my task."

With these words, he blessed the boy, and returned to the monastery.

Early in the morning the horses were ready, with a guide on foot to direct their path over the morass; and, after an affectionate farewell to every member of the community, the two travellers set forth upon their long journey. They passed the swamps in perfect safety, watched by the moistened eyes of the monks and children; and, reaching the cottage to which they had been directed by Theodric, found a guide, who conducted them to his retired and humble abode.

It was not, however, without surprise, and

some fear, that they beheld eight or ten armed horsemen upon the green plot before it: and they were about to turn hastily round, when Theodric himself, dressed in complete mail, rode towards them.

"What,"—said he, with a tone and manner that expressed at once pleasure at so unexpected a visit, and apprehension as to its probable cause, "Hath it then been as I feared? Hath the wild beast scented the place of his carnage? God forbid! Yet welcome, welcome! The house shall give you shelter, though its owner be far away. Welcome, holy father,—welcome my beloved child!"

As he spoke thus, he dismounted; and, taking Edmund from his horse, tenderly embraced him: he extended then his hand to Cynewulf, and, with a cordial grasp, enforced his invitation to enter his house.

"You will be alone, father," said he, "but you will be in safety. You see in me now a new man. That which was, and is not, shall be to me no more. The past is buried: I have sealed the tomb;—I will gaze no more on them that

sleep beneath it. Tears are dried up in me; but the fire of vengeance hath burst out. I have girt the sword upon my thigh; I have devoted myself to the work. For my country, for my religion, have I vowed to offer up life: I live, I breathe, I move, but for them. The arm of the oppressed will not long lie inactive,—and, where the first trumpet shall sound, there will my battle-shout be heard."

While, to the astonishment of Cynewulf and Edmund, he proceeded in this passionate strain, they walked on together; and had entered the house before he ceased. His look was high and resolved,—his step strong,—and his voice and manner vehement.

"But sit you down,"—said he, in a calmer tone, as they stood within the apartment,—"sit you down; and let me hear of the things which have chanced to you. Even now was I about to set forth; yet for one hour will I remain with you. Be brief then, reverend father, for there is a voice in my ear which cries continually, 'away, away!'—and I may not tarry longer with you."

In few words, Cynewulf then informed his impatient listener of the cause, and the purpose, of his journey; and Theodric instantly summoned his attendants to place food before them, and their horses.

"Your way is mine," said he,—"for half your journey we may travel together; and ye will be safer with us. I go to Ethelwulph, the brave Earl of Berks,—for he, I know, will not sleep when the wild boar is ravaging so near to his vineyard;—will you accept our company and our safeguard so far upon your way? or will you rather journey alone? Do as you list,—but at once determine. If you will share with us, then, because yourselves and your horses are perchance wearied, will we wait till the morrow; if you take rather your own path, then here at once we part."

"Gladly will we accept your company and protection," replied the monk, "for the boy, as you see, is feeble, and I also have less than my wonted vigour. Till to-morrow then, let us defer our setting forth; and for this day let us

lift up our voices to God, and call down a blessing upon our labours."

Theodric heard with pleasure the decision of the monk; and gave immediate orders to suspend the journey till sunrise of the next day. They passed the remaining hours in discourse, during which Theodric informed Cynewulf,—in the absence of Edmund, who had gone to renew his acquaintance with Balder and Huald,—of the horrid atrocities of the Northmen upon the miserable nuns at Ely,—and of the desolation which they had every where left behind them. But he did not inform him that he had, at his own charge, raised the small band with which he was hasting to join the first standard that should be lifted against the invaders; and that he had made provision for his faithful servant, and the aged female domestic, whom he never expected to see more.

In the evening,—after all had joined in solemn devotion,—they retired early to rest: and, before the sun had risen upon the next day, the tramp of their horses was heard in the forest.

It is not our intention to follow them upon

their journey. Suffice it to say that, after parting with Theodric and his little band at Oxford, Cynewulf and Edmund pursued their way alone, and arrived at length in safety, and with improved health and strength, at the Priory of Cothelstone, situated about five miles from Taunton, in the most beautiful valley of Somersetshire.

Here Cynewulf met with a cordial reception from his brother Edelhun, the prior, and from a few of the brethren who remembered him since the time when he had passed there his noviciate. Edmund was speedily domesticated with them; and the influence of the milder climate, and the total change of scene, began soon to restore to his mind the cheerfulness which it had formerly possessed.

The reader may perhaps have felt some interest during the detail of the dreadful event that darkened for a time the early life of our hero, but he would derive small amusement from the story of the quiet years that followed. And, for the unfortunate, a merciful ordination it is which compels man to sympathize with the sor-

rows and the difficulties of his fellows, rather than with their felicity. The happy need no sympathy, and no aid, and nature forces upon us no strong emotion at the sight of happiness, save that which has followed as the reward for danger and difficulty overcome, or for suffering nobly endured. But, for the miserable, wretched indeed would be the lot, if no heart were compelled to take share in their sorrows, and no hand bidden to administer relief.

Passing, therefore, over some peaceful and eventless years in the life of our little hero, we shall hope that the reader will accompany us to new times, new scenes, and new characters.

CHAPTER VI.

The vale of Taunton Dean, or Den, (probably from the Saxon *Den*, a woody valley,) is a spacious and fertile plain in the pleasant county of Somerset; having on the north the romantic hills of Quantock, on the south the long range of the Black Down heights, and on the west the hills of Brindon. Towards the east, and north-east, there extends a flat of twenty miles, bounded by the Polden hills. This beautiful vale, called by Camden one of the eyes of the county, enjoys a delicious climate; and, in its present highly cultivated state, appears, when viewed on a fine day from any of its surrounding heights, like one immense, and richly productive garden.

At the time of which we are at present writing, the whole valley was so crowded with majestic elm-trees, to which the soil is still peculiar-

ly favourable, that it might have been taken by the eye of a stranger for a continuous forest.

Some remains of a monastery are still visible upon the site where stood the small priory to which, in the last chapter, we conducted our little hero, and the monk Cynewulf. It was delightfully situated at the foot of the Quantock hills, and near to the village, or rather hamlet, of Cothelstone. The only family, of any note, resident in its immediate vicinity, was that of a wealthy Thegn, or Thane, named Leofric, from whose grandfather, in the reign of Ina, the monks had received a gift of land for the erection of their monastery, and a grant of certain manors which they were allowed to hold in fee-farm, at the low annual rent of five pounds.

The mansion of Leofric was situated about a mile north-west of the priory. It was a large, low, and irregular building, of which the parts had been evidently erected at different, and perhaps somewhat distant, periods of time. The walls of the more ancient and humble portions were formed with a frame-work of huge beams of oak, lathed and plastered, and ornamented at

the corners with small bricks, of a dark and light colour, placed alternately. The roofs were steep, and covered with slate: the windows of an oblong square, and formed of a fine lattice-work, which admitted light and wind with equal facility. The high, and somewhat narrow, doors, stood at the ends of the houses; and, though of much stronger construction, were not unlike those which we still see in our cottages. These portions of the building had long been appropriated to the numerous domestics, while the opulent owner kept his state in the larger, and more splendid, pile which had been erected by Walthiof, at the period when he founded and endowed the priory. This edifice was built entirely with large squared stones; and was adorned at the corners with red bricks, at that period a more rare and costly material than the former. The walls at the foundation were twelve feet thick, and of the, then unusual, height of forty feet. They supported a roof somewhat less precipitous than those of the older buildings, and, like them, covered with a fine grey slate. The windows were long and narrow, and glazed with small

diamond-shaped panes of an uneven and dimmish glass, which, though at the present day to be seen in the meanest houses, was at that time a rare and expensive luxury. For the admission of as much light as could possibly enter through so narrow and dim a medium, the walls were made to slope rapidly inward, and were covered with fine white cement, which reflected the light through the large and sombre looking apartments. These were, however, still so dark, that in the winter season it was necessary, throughout almost the whole of the day, to burn huge candles of wax, that stood in silver candlesticks upon small tables near the extremities of the rooms. The chimneys, of which there were two on the south side, and two, opposite them, on the north, were formed within the thickness of the walls; and the huge fire places were well arched, and neatly turned with thin bricks. To strengthen the walls at these places, there were strong buttresses, running up the whole height of the chimneys. There was but one door in front, rounded above, large, and of massy oak, that opened into a stone-paved hall which gave entrances to the four spacious apart-

ments which occupied the ground floor. A smaller door behind communicated with the other parts of the building through an arched passage of rough stone. Two steep staircases, formed with beams of oak, and awkwardly placed in contrary directions at the opposite sides of the entrance hall, led to the sleeping rooms above, which, with the exception of two in the front, reserved for guests of distinction, were mostly small, and ill lighted. The whole length of this structure might be a hundred feet, and its width, or depth, eighty. Numerous low buildings, used as stables, or workshops for the domestic artificers, gave to the whole an appearance rather of a hamlet attached to the residence of some wealthy Thane, than of the single establishment of one individual.

The furniture of this mansion was such as might have been expected from a view of its exterior,—expensive and ample,—but not always elegant or chaste. The hall was ornamented with horns of the immense moose-deer, which still was found occasionally amid the forests, and upon the extensive wilds ;—with dried

skins of the bear, the wolf, and the wild cat, whose white teeth grinned horribly out of the shrunken integuments; with brushes of the fox, and tusks of the wild boar,—an animal that supplied the Saxons with a frequent subject for the chase;—with rusted armour of various kinds, spears, bows, shields, swords, nets,—and all the implements of war, and of hunting. The stone floor was strewed with rushes; and from the ceiling was suspended, by a strong chain of brass, a glass lamp, fed with oil taken chiefly from the porpoise, of which great numbers frequented the neighbouring coasts, and the mouths of the rivers, where they were taken in dams, or weirs, which, at the receding of the tides, prevented their return.

The furniture of the sleeping apartments was generally of the simplest kind; consisting of a low bedstead, with little or no hangings,—pillows and bed of hair, or sometimes of plaited straw,—a table of shining oak, and one or two stools, covered with cloth, or the skin of some animal.

The two principal bed-rooms, however, re-

served for guests, were much more richly provided, having bedsteads with ivory posts, supporting testers of striped silk, somewhat in the form of a house roof, bed and window curtains, (termed *wahrifts*,) of purple silk, embroidered with flowers, basins of silver, gilt, for washing, small silver mirrors, and carved seats covered with rich cloth. But the most singular appendages to the beds, were gilded fly-nets, which, in this moist, warm, and wooded country, were sometimes used by the wealthy to defend themselves from the swarms of gnats which, in the summer months, infested the air.

The two principal apartments below were furnished with thick carpets of gawdy colours, extending to within a few feet of the walls, massive tables of black oak, inlaid with silver, having curiously carved legs, and pediments in the form of huge claws, stools covered with crimson cloth, and seats, capable of holding three or four persons, which had massive supporters for the arm at the ends, high, perpendicular backs, gilded edges, and cushions richly embroidered. Heavy yellow draperies, wrought of wool, with

which some portion of silk had been mingled, concealed and adorned the walls. The windows had curtains of thick crimson silk, in which Editha, the first wife of Walthiof, had, at immense labour, wrought, with a variety of gawdy colours, certain quaint devices intended to illustrate and commemorate the actions of her husband. There might the great defunct be seen, with most portentous brow, scarlet face, sky-blue eyes, yellow hair, green, blue, red, orange, and purple raiment, extending one pink-coloured hand toward a rainbow-tinted, and most solemn Prior, who, with upturned eyes, and mouth drawn awfully down, seemed filled and awed with the consciousness of his own holiness; while with the other hand he pointed toward a many-hued structure, intended for the distant priory, (but which, from the oddness of the perspective, appeared to be about two inches in height, and one inch from his nose,) in token of his having bestowed upon the monks that superb edifice.

Here again was he pourtrayed,—like a tulip-bed cut into a semblance of the human form,—giving directions respecting the building of his

house to bright-hued workmen larger than the house itself: and there stood he,—straddling wide, invincible in mackerel-coloured mail,—dealing, with a spear thicker than his own arm, horrible death to a blue wild boar, somewhat smaller than a terrier.

These productions of the virtuous lady's needle were much admired as rare and beautiful works of art; and were preserved with the utmost care.

Upon a massive shining table, at the end of the room, generally used during their meals, stood cups of silver, and of buffalo horn hooped and rimmed with gold, a dish of gold, and various vessels of glass, considered almost as costly. But, of all the ornaments of these rooms, the most prized and wondered at were four paintings, executed by the celebrated Bilfrith, about a hundred and fifty years before. These productions had been brought from Rome by Walthiof at the time when he attended his brother Alphuald, the bishop of Winchester, to render his homage at the foot of the papal throne; and were considered miracles of art. They repre-

sented the four evangelists, attired in draperies of the most contrasted and flaming colours. Over the head of each the artist had placed a semblance of the symbolical animal ascribed to him by the prophet Ezekiel: but, doubtful how far the uninstructed might comprehend so bold an attempt, he had, for their assistance, inscribed above each, the name of the creature for whom he wished it to be taken. There might he who could read,—and alas! the number was very small,—learn, from the authority of the illustrious Bilfrith, that a man was not a lion, a calf, or an eagle; for lo! in letters of gold was it written, "*This is the image of a man*,"—and again "*The image of a calf*,"—on a third "*The image of a lion*," and on the fourth, "*The image of an eagle*." This was, of course, evidence that could not be disbelieved: and, accordingly, the doubtful spectator—for sometimes men did doubt—was instantly put to silence by an appeal to the awful characters. Possibly, the actual presence of the blessed evangelist might make them feel it a sort of impiety to question that which he himself seemed in a manner ready to attest. The hand, too, by which

the animals were pictured, and the words traced, was that of a holy anchorite, who could not lie. To doubt the identity of the lion, or the calf, was, therefore, to doubt the truth of religion; and openly to avow such doubt, little short of a barefaced profession of atheism.

One individual indeed there was, a luckless inmate of the priory, brother Elf, who could never be brought to acknowledge his acquiescence in the received opinions. Many had been the abhorring looks cast upon him,—many the hinted suspicions of his infidelity, yet to the last did he persist in maintaining, whenever compelled to avow his sentiments, that the calf was the lion, and the lion the true calf. It was in vain to attempt by argument to convince him of his error,—the mouth, the paws, the tail, were referred to in vain: doggedly did he insist that the noble animal which they called a calf was truly the majestic monarch of the forest, and he who usurped his title, nothing more than the ignoble progeny of a cow. But of the ingenious brother Elf more anon.

The description which we have given of the

abode of Leofric may perhaps be sufficient to convey a tolerable notion of it; and we shall therefore say no more excepting just to add that, in consequence of the insecurity of the times, the whole was surrounded by a ditch forty feet broad, and eight feet in depth, having on the outer side a thick bank, or vallum, of earth, eight feet in height, and on the inner side a similar vallum of the height of ten feet. These banks were faced with large squared stones; and on the outer vallum were small turrets, in the Roman fashion, provided with loop holes, from which assailants might be annoyed with arrows. The entrances to this little fortress were two, on the north and on the south; where strong gates of oak, flanked by small towers, gave admission, over walled causeways, to two other gates of equal strength, which secured the passage through the inner vallum. These defensive works had been added by Leofric, within a year or two after the arrival of Edmund, in consequence of the increasing alarm with which the West Saxons began to contemplate the incursions of the Northern plunderers.

Having thus finished a hasty picture of what was sometimes denominated the castle of Leofric, it is necessary that we should now say a few words of the worthy proprietor himself.

Leofric was, at the time when our story introduces him, about the age of fifty. In stature he was somewhat below the usual height, but broad-shouldered, and compactly built. His cheeks, which in his youth had been florid and fair, were now well browned by exposure to sun and wind, during his alternate labours in the chase, and in the field, where he at once superintended, and shared in, the toils of his domestics. His hair, which, according to the Saxon custom, he allowed to descend in curls upon his back and shoulders, was of a light, reddish-brown, parted in front, and hanging down in ringlets upon the side of the head. He had greyish eyes, rather small, but bright and quick, eyebrows which were scarcely perceptible, a straight, well-formed, nose, a mouth usually inclined to a smile, and teeth, white and well set, which seemed to indicate a fore-knowledge in dame Nature of the work which they would

have to perform, and of the durability required for mill-stones destined to so incessant a grinding. He was of a free, jovial temper; kind and unsuspecting, but impatient of every thing that opposed his will; and apt to employ summary means for the attainment of his desires, or the punishment of those who thwarted them. He had been in his youth among those who most warmly resisted the attempt to remove Ethelwulf from all power, at the time when his son Ethelbald, assisted by a conspiracy of the nobles, at whose head was Alstan, the Bishop of Winchester, had seized upon the throne: and it was mainly through the vehemence of his expostulations that the nobles at length demanded of the new government that the dethroned monarch should be permitted to rule the subordinate kingdom of Kent. The ill-will which his active share in this measure had procured him from Ethelbald, had lessened his inclination to interfere with the squabbles of courts; and he had for some years troubled himself but little about them. To the succeeding king, Ethelred, he had been unknown; and of the ruling mo-

narch, Alfred, he had little to say more than that "he could not for the heart of him make out what he was, or what he was not. At the Ash-tree Hill," was he wont to say, "he fought like twenty devils; and yet, ever since that, what has he done but hammer at his cursed book-learning, and teach, and pray, and preach, like a whole convent of monks! A good priest, may be, might have been had out of him,—but, for a Wessex king, there's stout old Tondhere, the fighting weaver of Taunton, would have been worth ten of him. But I know no ill of him, for all that,—only pity 'tis yon blood thirsty Northmen should wile him as they have with their horse-shoulder oaths, and their smacking upon relics that they would as soon spit upon as kiss. Bad times, when a king, who should never sheathe sword, or doff armour, takes to teaching monks Latin, and judges to write their own names, and statesmen to reckon with figures, as if their own ten fingers that God made for them to count by were not better than those confounded crooked things, invented, as they say, by heathen pagan Rabians, or whatever they

call them, that are enough to drive Christian men distracted. Bad times, father Edelhun,—awful times brother Cynewulf,—and worse yet to come, I fear me, if the hawk that ought to fly highest go on mousing close to the ground in this fashion. And for you, my young master," addressing himself sometimes to Edmund, when that youth had the advantage, in the absence of his instructor, to hear these speculations, "as you are not, for aught I can see, likely to doff silk tunic and cloak for monk's cowl, and robe of sackcloth, nor your gold broidered boots for bare feet, why I can tell no good to come to you by wasting your time over reading, and writing, and Latin, like one of the old monks a hundred years bygone. They know better now-a-days, to be sure; and addle their brains by no such trumpery, though night and day the poor crazy king, they say, is at them to bring back the old times among them again. For your harping, why that's clean another thing; and I don't mind your thrumming a morning away now and then, when the rain keeps one in doors, and nothing better to do; for it whiles

off an hour pleasantly enough in a winter evening to hear you give it out like the veriest minstrel that ever lived by tickling catgut with thumb and four fingers: and Ethelburga likes it well enough too, and so does my wife, when they have done with their spinning wheels, or taken to their broidery, which does not buzz and sing in their ears like t'other: and therefore, as I said, I have nothing to object against your harping at times: but for Christ's sake, lad, leave your pen-scrawling, and your monk-learning a-bit; and try your hand more at the ash-lance, and the sword, and the yew-bow; and for once that you back horse after the hounds, why prick away five times,—and then something may be hoped for you."

To admonitions of this kind he would however generally add, speaking to any one who had heard them, or to himself when in the presence of no other person "but he's a good lad, and a gentle, and a spirited, for all his learning, and I dont like to cross him."

The family of Leofric consisted of his wife Kentwina, one daughter, whose name was Ethel-

burga, and a son called Oswulf; but the manners of the time permitted so free an intercourse betwixt master and servant that, of the forty domestics who dwelt under the roofs of Leofric, thirty of them, for the other ten were slaves, and, as such, treated with somewhat less respect, might have appeared to a modern eye, could such have seen them, as all relations, though perhaps humble ones, of the same family.

In their dress, it is true, the distinction betwixt the superior and the inferior was far greater than obtains in our day: but Manchester and Glasgow were not then in existence: and a really philanthropic mind will rather rejoice that the power of art has extended to the million enjoyments that heretofore belonged to the favoured few only, than carp at the little fineries with which our labouring classes make to themselves, on one Sunday afternoon, a harmless consolation for the six preceding days of toil. The real superiority of man over man lies in the mind, and not in the costliness or fashion of his garments: and this true superiority will ever be acknowledged by the humbler ranks, and submitted to

with cheerfulness. If the proud and ignorant noble dreads the advance of knowledge in the lower classes, let him acquire for himself the mental wealth which he feels to be power in them, and he may be sure that, at the present, as well as at any former period, rank and riches will maintain their ascendency.

Kentwina, the wife of Leofric, was of that order of persons commonly called "very good sort of people." She had no high virtues, and no vices. She was affectionate to her children, kind to her husband, and not often out of temper with her servants. But she was totally uneducated, excepting in such knowledge as concerned the management of her household, or such ornamental arts of needlework as were practised by the ladies of the time. Some little pretension, it is true, she had, in common with other females of her class, to medical skill; and upon this one point she was apt to manifest a stout self-opinion, and a jealousy of the interference of others, which was rather discordant with the usual mildness and easiness of her disposition.

For ages the Saxon females had been considered as the natural physicians of man; and, the more advanced in years, the more were they supposed to be advanced in knowledge also. Kentwina, therefore, being now at the age of forty-six, or thereabouts, felt herself authorized to lay down the law upon these matters to all who were younger than herself; and especially to that sex whom she held to be, according to the very intention of Nature, totally unqualified to meddle with them.

It is amusing enough to see how the prejudice and intolerance which exasperated the Saxon ladies against male physicians, have, in later days, been taken up by practitioners of the other sex, by many of whom the supposition of medical capacity in a female is held to be matter of scorn. But the unscientific female of the present day is not more liable to error than the uninstructed male prescriber: and perhaps the time is not far distant when society will become sensible of the disadvantages of confining medical practice to one sex. That masculine firmness and decision may be often required to arrest, or extirpate,

disease, no one will doubt; but equally certain it is that, in the greater number of cases, a gentle watchfulness, and considerate tenderness, and personal delicacy, are demanded, which none but a woman can fitly supply. We have among us many noble institutions: but, when we consider the important advantages that must accrue from it, we may perhaps feel inclined to place among the truest benefactors of our species that individual who shall first set the example of founding *a female medical college*.

But we must return to our Saxon practitioner, as indignant an opposer of the innovation then stealing upon female privilege, as the great Doctor ***** or ***, can possibly prove himself to be of our predicted female college.

CHAPTER VII.

With the exception of certain squabbles arising occasionally from the eccentricities of the luckless brother Elf, it was upon the one question of medical practice alone that Kentwina ever had any unpleasant dispute with the members of the priory. The great spread of monasteries, into which women were reluctantly admitted, even when they were supposed to bring with them the restoratives of health, had made it necessary that the science of healing should become the peculiar study of some of the other sex; and, in the larger convents particularly, it had been for some time the custom that one of the brethren should devote himself, exclusively of all other duties save those of his religion, to the office of conventual physician. His practice was not, however, limited to the monastery; but gradually extended around its vicinity, according

to the ratio in which it was found, or supposed, by the discriminating neighbours, that ill-taught monks were better than old women wholly untaught.

Medical books were to be found in almost every monastery; but they had been mostly brought from Rome, and were written in Latin; a circumstance which,—at a time when, as Alfred asserts, scarcely three persons could be found in the kingdom capable of reading that language,—prevented any very rapid increase of such medical knowledge as those books might have furnished. It could not, however, prevent a solemn pretension to that knowledge; and, with the uninstructed of all ages, this generally passes quite as well as knowledge itself.

Now the good brother Wiglaf, physician of the priory of Cothelstone,—though, many a time and oft, he had been seen profoundly poring over a ponderous Latin tome, strongly cased in vellum, and adorned with quaint devices, intended to represent the various parts, external and internal, of this our fleshy mansion,—had for several years,—we grieve to say it,—known no

more than his own brass mortar one word that it contained. Not the less was he looked up to, and wondered at, by his simple-minded brethren, and even by the prior Edelhun himself, as a man of uncommon erudition, and profound genius. Upon this point Leech Wiglaf,—for by that title was he distinguished and honoured,—did not think it good for them that they should be put to rights: nay, he even himself began at times to doubt whether he did not know more of the learned tongue than he had thought for. In that which the whole brotherhood esteemed him to know so well, surely, he thought, he must have, at the least, some smattering. The arrival of Father Cynewulf, however, at length convinced him of his mistake.

Two visits to Rome,—in one of which he had accompanied Ethelwulf, and the young Alfred, —together with a frequent study of some of the best writers in the language, had made the Latin tongue perfectly familiar to Cynewulf; and the scarcity of books rendered him eager to peruse all,—whatever might be the subject,— which chanced to fall in his way. The portly

volume of Leech Wiglaf,—for that good easy man, secure in his own pre-eminence, and dreading no inquisitive eye, sought not to conceal a treasure that so mainly attested his learning, and conduced to his importance,—did not, of course, escape him; and, for want of better matter, he soon became deeply busied with Arthritis, Empyema, Odontalgia, Miserere Mei,—and other of the pleasant fruits which have so luxuriantly ripened upon the tree of original sin.

Nor had this his diligent feeding upon the mystic book not been once or twice noticed by the learned Leech Wiglaf. He, good man! had seen the gathered brow of the new-come brother, as he bent over the "handwriting upon the *book*"—but little suspected in him a second Daniel, wise to interpret the words which, to an astrologer like himself, were an incomprehensible mystery. True enough it was—thus ran his thoughts,—that the curious brother sat for hours with eye intent upon the shining vellum, and that, ever and anon, his hand turned over the softly crackling leaf,—but then had not he, Leech Wiglaf himself, done also even like unto this? An un-

common ardour of curiosity, truly, did it appear in one not devoted to the learned faculty,—but the whim would pass away: he himself had taken odd fancies at times;—monks, like other men, must have their playthings,—this was brother Cynewulf's, good man!—and, when he was tired of it, he would lay it down.

Once or twice, indeed, it had occurred to the worthy Leech, that a gravity and a perseverance so uncommon denoted in the new brother a peculiar aptitude and genius for his own solemn profession, which it were almost a pity to leave neglected. Proud thoughts then arose of the dignity that might accrue to himself from seeing at his feet so distinguished a disciple: but then,—the Latin,—yet even upon that point he need not despair. That brother Cynewulf, at his time of life, should for one moment entertain a thought of penetrating that great mystery, was impossible; or, at most, he could not dare aspire farther than to a power of enunciating a few of its more sonorous phrases, and, to this extent, Wiglaf felt himself competent to be his instructor. Often had he poured forth in the presence of his bre-

thren the long rolling periods; and had witnessed their admiration and amazement: easy then would be the task, and great the increase of his own dignity for a while. But then,—the disciple would at length become himself a professor,—and the throne upon which he, Leech Wiglaf, now sat unquestioned monarch, must thenceforward be shared with a rival. The thought was discarded. Wiglaf must stand alone.

To the astonishment, however, of the learned doctor, brother Cynewulf, on one eventful day, immediately after the noon refection, bearing under his arm the awful volume, entered his presence; and, with the fore digit of his right hand placed upon the leaf, while, with the extended palm of his left, he supported the book beneath, proceeded to address him. As he went glibly on, the pale finger, which had at first been stationary, moved swiftly from line to line: and, ever and anon, the speaker's eye glanced from the page to the marvelling countenance of the listener, and thence upon the page again. The brow of the speaker was slightly knit; his keen,

and angular eye; the varying expression of his face, and, at times, the emphatic motion of his head, seemed to intimate, that of *this* he doubted —*this* could not comprehend,—and *this* wholly rejected. After he had ceased to speak, he stood, with the opened book still in his hand; and, looking upon the face of the learned leech, seemed to await his reply.

Now, for a short time, Doctor Wiglaf spake not a word. With great staring eyes, he had stood from the first, moving his head from the book to the face of the speaker, and thence to the book again, in exact time with the same movements in the speaker himself: but, when the last word had died away upon his ear, just as much did he know as at the birth of the first. Indubitably he had heard Latin! For a while he was shocked,—dumbfounded. His greatness seemed about to perish: the glory that had so long dwelt upon him appeared to be vanishing; —deep shadows seemed gathering about him; his renown would be as the voice of the years that are gone by. But a ray of light arose to cheer his darkness. That the good brother

Cynewulf could *really* understand, and talk, the hidden language, must, he thought, be impossible. Of a surety the words that he had heard were Latin,—yet not right Latin, for were they not so pronounced as he himself had never pronounced them? Brother Cynewulf, then, must be trying to cheat him, as he had himself so often cheated others. It must be so: the truth was plain: but the impostor should meet his match.

Thus emboldened, Leech Wiglaf,—calling to his aid such sonorous Latin phrases as he could recollect, and snatching from time to time, here and there, with hasty glance of the eye, such words, or portions of words, as the yet opened book presented to him,—began fearlessly to pour forth his reply. Now he pointed to the page,—and now to himself: now lifted his right hand to the sky,—now with his left seemed as though he would thrust down to the antipodes: smote on the table now,—and now upon the book: now raised his voice with vehemence,—depressed it now to a whisper: and all the while rolled on the tide of eloquence, astonished at himself,—

astounding his mute hearer,—till at length,—after having with the forefinger of his right hand told emphatically thrice over the wide-spread fingers of his left,—after having struck upon his bosom,—and stamped upon the floor,—he ceased,—and, solemnly folding his arms, stood with pursed-up brow, looking proudly upon his antagonist, as if challenging a reply.

For a time there was a dead silence. Cynewulf had at first feared that the poor man was distracted: but the truth soon became evident to him; and, while he could scarcely suppress a smile, he felt moved to compassion. In the gentlest manner, he undeceived the poor physician; and, far from seeking to triumph over him, or to lower his reputation with the brethren, he concealed from all that which he had discovered; and patiently, and diligently, occupied himself in imparting the knowledge so much wanted.

Nor was his labour useless. Leech Wiglaf,—for he was sufficiently wise to his own good,—after the first surprize and humiliation had subsided, applied himself with thankfulness and earnestness to his task: and, after a year spent

in unremitting study, was enabled, in a considerable degree, to understand, as well as to pore over, the huge brass bound volume.

From this time, however, Leech Wiglaf felt himself to be a greater man: and, whereas he had formerly heard without contradiction, and even at times with an appearance of submission, the medical dissertations of the wise Kentwina, he now, not unfrequently, boldly opposed her arguments, and discarded her practice.

This then, as I have said, was a sore point, with the otherwise mild lady of Leofric; and almost the only subject of dispute betwixt herself and the inmates of the priory. The Latin names by which Wiglaf chose now to designate diseases of every kind, were abominable in her ears: and his new modes of cure seemed to her little less than wilful murder.

"What, in the name of all the blessed saints! Master Wiglaf," would she say,—looking the doctor angrily in the face, while, with one arm stuck upon her hip, she flourished the other in the air, "what, in the name of all the saints in heaven, Master Wiglaf, does this mean? Is not

foot adl * foot adl, just as it was before,—that you must come here, and din my ears with your heathen genaggra, or nagra, or whatever you call it? And is not heafod-ece † heafod-ece,—that Christian people are to be deafened with your new-fangled siffelalgi, that it is a shame to hear spoken? And I suppose, Master Wiglaf, if you had the toth-ece ‡ or lungs adl § or gedrif ‖ or blacan blegene ¶ you might cure them all so well if you would condescend to call them as our forefathers called them, as when you turn our very stomachs with your gibberish oddentalge, and tissis, and synokens, and frunklus.—I tell you, Master Wiglaf, it's a sin and a shame, for you, who are a monk of the priory of Cothelstone, and a Christian man, and ought to know better, to go about deceiving poor people, and calling things by false names, such as were never before heard in this kingdom of Wessex: and no good will come of it. And you to go bleeding the poor theow Wybba on the eleventh day

* Gout. † Headach. ‡ Toothach.
§ Consumption. ‖ Fever. ¶ Boils.

of the month, as you did,—which every body knows to be as bad and unlucky a-day as could be picked out,—and the moon in the second quarter too.—Master Wiglaf! Master Wiglaf! it's a mere flying in the face of God, who gave us understandings to know better,—all but fools, —and, for them, I trow they should stay at home, and not go about the country curing folks wiser than themselves. 'Fool, heal thyself,' I have heard some of you priests say, and a good saying it is—Well-well—if it isn't fool, it's physician,—and that you know, Master Wiglaf, comes sometimes to the same thing."

In this spirit did the good lady at times chastise with her tongue the rebellion of leech Wiglaf against her authority. But, upon the whole, she was a simple-minded, kind and well meaning woman. In her person, she was somewhat thin, and rather undersized; had dark brown hair, keen hazle-eyes, and a face that in its prime had been handsome.

Her only fault, if such it might be termed, was an over affection for her son Oswulf, an ignorant, cunning, brutish, and grovelling fellow,

whose sole pleasures were in the destruction of every species of animal, and the indulgence of every kind of sensuality. Ignorant as a slave, he was haughty and fierce as a pirate king. He knew nothing of conscience but that which was suggested by his fears, and nothing of religion but its ceremonies; which, since the time that his attendance at mass had ceased to be compulsory, he had not yet had time enough wholly to forget. Upon one point alone did he appear to feel veneration, or awe of any thing. He was the slave of a brutish and gloomy superstition. Every Wiglaer,* Wicca,† Galdor-crœftig,‡ or Morthwyrtha,§ whose fame reached him, found in Oswulf a worshipper and a dupe. The art of the physician was laughed at by him unless the proposed remedy were a magical incantation. He knew of charms for the recovery of lost property,—for preventing accidents,—for unwitching cattle,—for insuring successful crops:— every day in the month was set down in his belief as

* Wizard. † Witch. ‡ One skilled in incantations.
§ A worshipper of the dead.

propitious, or unpropitious: *this* day was good for all things, and *that* was friendly for none: *one* was favourable for planting corn, but very unfavourable for taming animals: on *one* day it was good to undertake *any* business; on another day good to *buy* only,—and on another good only to sell: a child born on *such* a day would live,—while one born on another would die. For the day, he had spells and signs by which to read futurity,—and for the night he had dreams, of as sure prognostication.

Yet, hateful as were his dispositions, he had been in his infancy tenderly beloved by his parents; and even when all his vices were ripened at the age of nineteen, continued to hold an undeserved, though certainly abated, portion of their love. But he was now rarely in the home of his father. The company of the dissolute, wherever to be met with, or of the crafty pretenders to magical skill, or of the vulgar who courted and flattered him for the sake of the gold which his father injudiciously supplied him with, or that of any person whomsoever from whose eye he did not, as at home, or with the

members of the priory, meet with a silent reproof,—such was the society with whom he delighted to associate. He hated all who were not of his own stamp; but, of all the objects of his distaste and hatred, the chief was Edmund, whom he abhorred, and sometimes almost resolved even to put to death. He despised him for his gentleness, and love of study, and aversion from sports that involved pain to man or to brute: he loathed him because by every one else he was beloved; because he stood evermore like a bright and pure metal that made his own base dross show doubly worthless: because his personal comeliness, and noble mien, and modest, yet dignified, address, attracted the admiration and love of all, while they forced a comparison which rendered trebly odious his own ugliness, and brutal vulgarity: and he meditated injury, if not death, to him, because he feared that the object so much beloved by his father might ultimately enjoy a considerable portion of that wealth to which he considered himself exclusively entitled.

The machinations of the wicked become some-

times the means of good to their intended victims: the adversities which they may heap upon them call into action powers and resources in the sufferer which might else have slept, or been unknown to himself; and which may continue to spur him on to higher attempts, long after the difficulties which gave the first impulse to them have been overcome. He that never toils, comes never to his full strength: the oak that is never tried by the tempest, never grapples with its roots the deep soil: and the man that has never struggled with difficulty has never attained to, or known, half the strength that nature has implanted within him.

In what way the villainous designs of the odious Oswulf affected the fortunes of his intended victim will be seen in the progress of our story, since we must not, by a few words, anticipate that final result which it is the office of our pages slowly and gradually to evolve. Probably enough, indeed, the curious eye of many a stanch novel reader, long ere it has reached this chapter, may have hasted to acquaint itself with the end of all, and have set

conjecture at rest by finding out who the hero is, and who the yet unmentioned, but of course anticipated, heroine:—whether he, or she, met with a disastrous fate,—or whether—according to the better established practice of novel writing—*all were very happy ever afterwards.* If such there be, we may regret, but cannot help it. Novel readers, as well as statesmen, and, in truth, men of all classes, have a great desire to look into futurity; and, if we might turn over the leaves of years as we can those of books, who among us could refrain from seeking out the page upon which he would find recorded his own final doom? In mercy is that book shut from us: for all the bright hopes that lead us on, and all the trials that arouse our energies, would, at the sight of that dread *Finis*, feel already the touch of death. It is the uncertainty of the result that gives its chief interest to the game. Who would take up the cards if all could foreknow the termination of the game? It is true that a tale ought to excite other, and more enduring, emotions than a mere curiosity to know the final event; but it is also true that in this

last ought to be found one of its earliest, and most seductive, attractions. For both reader and writer therefore,—and for such writers in particular as, like ourselves, cannot hope for a plot of stirring excitement, or great novelty,—it is a pity that over impatient curiosity should fling away so main a support through the labours of both, by turning to that page where must be read the death-warrant of doubt, of fear, and of hope. By novel readers, this anticipation of the catastrophe should be considered as the forbidden fruit: and true enough it is that the curiosity which eateth thereof will surely die. With the full expectation that, upon the old and hardened sinner, this short sermon will only act as another incentive to turn first to the last page of the next new novel that falls in his way, we shall now add a few words to complete our sketch of the amiable Oswulf.

In person he was above the common height, and strongly, but heavily, made. His gait was ungraceful, his language was coarse, and his whole manners were those of one regularly graduated in the school of vulgarity. To a large head, co-

covered with thick, flaming-red hair, but low brow, he added the recommendation of a set of features almost ugly, and a complexion in which freckles and pimples were liberally distributed. When roused, his motions were quick enough; but his usual walk was slow; while his fierce grey eyes, glancing ever sideways more than in the direction that he followed, his downcast head, and huge, swelling shoulders,—upon which the graceful Saxon cloak sat like a steed's trappings upon an ox,—gave to his whole appearance a character that reminded many of a huge wild boar, when in a state of sluggish tranquillity.

It may perhaps be thought unnatural that so revolting an animal should have been the progeny of such parents as we have described: but Nature ~~sometimes~~ chuses sometimes to be unnatural; and ~~Ulwulf would~~ we cannot help it; our business being to record solely ~~he found to give his imperfections to some remote progenitor,—whom, however, we want~~ that which was, and not that which ought to have been, ~~mclination to trace.~~ We have done with his picture, and shall proceed with another, and more agreeable one.

The twaddle erased, was inserted, in place of that which is restored, by a well meaning friend, after the revise had been returned by me to the printer. E. L.

CHAPTER VIII.

Ethelburga, his sister, was as unlike to Oswulf as can be any sister of any brute that any of our readers may be able to recollect. She was delicate in person and in mind, gentle in speech and in action, honourable in word and in deed. This one sentence has of course been sufficient to invest her, in the minds of nine youthful readers out of ten, with all the dignity that may attach itself to the heroine of the story. That she is to be very beautiful, must immediately follow: Edmund must necessarily fall in love with her,—must be opposed by Oswulf,—must at last kill him,—(unless the boor should rather take himself out of the way by breaking his own neck, or getting hanged,)—and, finally, must crown his happiness by marrying her, and succeeding, at the death of the good Leofric, to all his estates.

Perhaps, however, things may turn out other-

wise. At all events, we readily admit that she *was* very handsome; and that Edmund might have done much worse than by falling in love with her. Whether he did so or not, will be seen as we advance in our story.

Ethelburga was pale, of a slender and delicate form, and about the common stature of females. Her hair was of the prevailing colour of the Saxon race, which might be called a golden red, or a reddish gold. Her eyes were blue, and mild: the characteristic expression of her face was sweetness and gentleness; but at times it could brighten with animation, and devoted enthusiasm. Her step was light, her motions were graceful. She had a laugh ready for mirth, and a tear ready for sorrow. She was fond of music, but played upon no instrument; delighted in books, but,—till shortly before her appearance in our story,—had never been taught to read. Her instructor was, of course, Edmund: but never mind that: it is by no means inevitably necessary that masters should fall in love with their scholars: it is, at least, quite sure that very few

scholars are disposed to fall in love with their masters.

We have now, with a minuteness which we deem advantageous to our history, sketched the characters of the individuals who formed the family of Leofric: but there still remains one inmate of the house whom we have not yet formally placed there,—though perhaps enough has been indirectly said to make the reader anticipate our intention to do so;—and that inmate is, of course, the hero of our story.

Within a very short time of the arrival of Edmund at the priory, he attracted the attention, and, soon after, the love of Leofric, and of his whole family, with the exception of Oswulf. An unlimited permission, on the part of Cynewulf and the prior, to attend the family of the Thane, whenever invited by them, soon made Edmund a daily visitor at their mansion; and these visits were, in no great length of time, exchanged for a permanent residence there. His personal beauty, his cheerful temper, his affectionate gratitude for every kindness, which were doubly delightful as contrasted with their opposites in Oswulf, so won

the heart of the good Thane, that he at last made a proposal to the prior and Cynewulf, that the boy should take up his abode with him, and be thenceforth considered as one of his family. A hint that ulterior advantages might accrue to Edmund from this adoption, accompanied the proposal; and the prior and Cynewulf, after an hour's consideration, consented to it. The difference was, that, whereas Edmund had formerly been at home in the priory, and a visitor during his unemployed hours at the mansion,—he was now at home in the mansion,—and at the priory, whither he daily went for the purposes of instruction, a visitor. This may perhaps appear a slight distinction; but it was, in truth, an important difference. In the eyes of the whole family, Edmund now appeared in another, and more interesting character. In those who loved him, this change of situation excited a warmer love; while, in the one who hated him, it stirred up a deeper and more malignant hatred.

Love, as well as jealousy, "doth make the meat it feeds on." There is implanted in man a feeling of benevolence, which gives rise to love;

and we naturally desire objects upon which to exercise it. Some men there may perhaps be to whose tempers it is necessary that they should have something to hate;—more, we trust, there are to whom life would be burthensome if they could find nothing to love. The solitary prisoner found a friend in his spider: many a man, whose erroneous opinion, or unhappy experience, had taught him that man was a monster to be feared and hated, has poured forth upon a dog, a cat, or a bird, the affection that could find no where else a vent. That we rarely meet with such whom we deem wholly deserving of so high a sentiment, makes them but the more prized when found. The object upon which we have once fixed our love, once exerted our active benevolence, we cannot easily discard: we bear with faults, we excuse imperfections: it is become, as it were, a portion of ourselves,—a limb which we cannot without pain cut off,—a part of our being without which life would seem to be incomplete. The more that we have done for the advantage and happiness of such,—the more we have forgotten self,—the more we have

toiled, and the more endured for such,—by so much the more does it seem incorporated into ourselves, by so much is it the more difficult to separate it from us.

As a visitor at the house of Leofric, Edmund was liked by the good Thane better than any thing but his own family; as an inmate there, —as a being whose happiness thenceforth would depend upon his care,—he was beloved by him as his own child. A far closer connexion than heretofore betwixt Edmund and every member of the family was, of course, the immediate consequence of his being domiciliated with them: and, as we love with the greatest warmth, or hate with the deadliest rancour, the friends, or the enemies, with whom we are by circumstances the most closely brought into contact,—so, while the affection of all the rest of the family began immediately to glow with warmer fervour, the hatred of Oswulf became as instantly a more utter abhorrence. For a considerable time, however, this hatred was kept under control by his parents: and the sulky and malignant lad, however he might strive incessantly to

vex the object of his aversion, had neither means nor courage to do him serious injury.

Of Ethelburga, when the time permitted, Edmund was the constant companion: he loved her as a sister, and like a brother was beloved by her. It is true that, as years advanced, it was expected by many that this love would assume another character: and, long before either of them had any conception of the existence of this other kind of love, it had been set down in the minds of every predictor of matches, that the young cniht of Leofric would infallibly, at the proper period, become his son. But "matches," the proverb says, "are made in Heaven;" and an earthly guesser may therefore be excused if events should prove that he had not been thoroughly informed of what was going on there.

At all events, years passed away; the child Ethelburga became the interesting girl whom we have described, and Edmund the young man whom we are about to describe; but still there was no appearance in which the match-makers aforesaid could positively read the approaching fulfilment of their predictions.

True enough it was, that the handsome and noble-looking youth was well known to have recently become her instructor in reading, and even in writing, an excess of learning that seemed ridiculous for a female; plain enough was it to the eye of all, that he accompanied her often to the religious duties of the priory, and sometimes, though rarely, when she joined her father in the chase; that he was seen alone with her in the garden, and in the fields; and on the hill tops when they went together to see the sun rise, or set, or to look forth upon the magnificent prospect of hill and valley, and distant sea, with its two enchanted islands, and its dim back-ground of Welsh mountains; that he appeared affectionate and devoted to her; eager to afford her amusement, and assiduous to guard her from pain or annoyance,—but yet—yet —" said the puzzled and dissatisfied prognosticators,—" somehow or other, it isn't quite the thing now. He likes her well enough, that's sure; and looks kindly enough on her: but, what the plague! when he sits cheek by jowl for hours with her, poking over the black

letters, can he never find time to take her a soft smack on the lily white cheek?—or even to squeeze her hand, that's softer and whiter than fresh curd, when he puts the long goose-quill between her slim fingers? And when he helps her over a ditch, or a stile, what, the good virgin! might he not now and then clasp her small waist, and no great harm done, instead of handing her over, as he does, so trimly and delicately, with his face as bright as the morning, and as cold as the dew? We know well enough neighbours, that our good men courted us in another guess fashion;—but somehow times seem changed; and God above only knows what is coming upon us. Men are not the men they used to be since these cursed Danes began to trouble the land as they do, and what will come of it at last passes man's wisdom, or woman's either, to make out."

Of this kind were the remarks frequently made by the gossips who held it next to impossible that "the handsomest young fellow upon whom eyes were ever clapped," could do other than love, and be loved by, a maiden that was

" pretty as a fairy, and rich as the daughter of an earl."

But conjecture, until converted to certainty, must vary its direction: like the wind, it bloweth whence it listeth; and, like that, never listeth to keep very long in the same quarter. Two visits, the first accidental, the second voluntary, from a young nobleman of high expectation and importance, turned the predictions of the prophets into a new course; and threatened, as they thought, to cast a thick darkness upon the hitherto bright prospects of our hero. We shall place together the pictures of the two predicted rivals, that such of our readers as expect a competition betwixt them for the hand of Ethelburga may then form their own opinions of the respective chances of each for success.

Enough may probably be known of the native disposition of Edmund, from that which has been already recorded, or intimated, of him: and we shall, therefore, only say that all the promises of his boyish years had been amply fulfilled as he advanced towards that interesting period of life when the blossom of youth is full blown, and the

fruit is appearing which, in the summer of manhood, may be expected to ripen. He was still grateful, and affectionate,—sensitive, and gentle,—bold, and romantic: still united piety towards his Creator, with benevolence towards all that He had created. The heart that, in his hour of trial, had warmed and softened toward the gentle Aslauga, was still to be subdued by kindness:—but the pride that had made him scorn to purchase life with dishonour at the hands of Rolf, was still unextinguished within him; and the fiery impetuosity that had lifted his baby hand against the gigantic Hubbo, still blinded him to consequences when he had to defend the oppressed, or to chastise the brutal. It is not often that infantine beauty expands into manly comeliness; but in Edmund every anticipation had been realized. His form was cast in nature's finest mould; combining grace and dignity, with activity and uncommon strength. In stature he was considerably above the middle height, but did not appear tall. His cheeks had still the fine bloom that they had worn in his boyish years; and his luxuriant hair still retained its tinge of gold. His

eyes were of a bright blue, full, but not large: they looked mild, or serious, joyous or sorrowful, affectionate or fiery, with equal vividness of expression, in accordance with the feeling that animated him: but their prevailing expression was that of gentleness and noble seriousness. His forehead was high and full; his nose straight and finely finished; his lips rather full, and delicately curved; and his chin slightly prominent, and elegantly rounded off. We will only add to the portrait, that his step was graceful and dignified; and that, though his customary pace was somewhat slow, in accordance with the prevailing gentleness and seriousness of his disposition, yet he had at command an agility and vigour, when called upon to put them forth, which as fully answered to the decision and impetuosity of his occasional feelings. In his dress he liked to be rich, but never gawdy, or foolishly expensive. He was temperate at his meals; and, though often rallied for it by the jovial Thane, averse from other drink than that of the dairy or the "crystal well."

Such was the youth, now in his eighteenth

year, with whom Ethelburga had passed nearly seven quiet and happy years; and if she did not, according to established usage, fall desperately in love with him, it is no fault of ours.

Our next task must be to introduce to the reader his predicted rival; but, as an exhibition of mere portraits is apt to be tiresome, we shall seek to enliven it by a touch of what may perhaps be called the humble historical.

CHAPTER IX.

It was a fine evening of September, in the year eight hundred and seventy-seven; and the family of Leofric, including Oswulf, had just finished their substantial supper, and were about to arrange themselves around the huge fire-place, that such who chose it might quietly take off their horn of strong ale, or wine, and that all might enjoy at once the warmth of the hissing ashen-faggot, and the music of Edmund's harp, which he was then in the act of tuning, as he sat in the recess of one of the deep windows. Oswulf had come home just before supper, a good deal fatigued after a fox chase in the morning, and the delectable sport of a bull-baiting in the afternoon, in which he had borne a considerable part, and secured the loud approbation of the respectable *theows* and *esnes* of Taunton, who had invited him to join them in their favourite manly

pastime, because they knew that he had no pity for brutes, and plenty of money for their persecutors. The gentle Oswulf would not have returned to Cothelstone that night, had it not been that he was engaged, early on the following morning, to attend a boar hunt; and, afterwards, a dog-fight, upon which depended his own reputation as a judge, at a village about ten miles to the north-west. He had taken his meal in sulky silence, and already ensconced himself in a corner of the fire-place, where he sat scowling sideways at Edmund, and at Ethelburga, who stood beside him, leaning a little forward, and apparently asking him some question respecting the instrument. Such of the household as had been partaking, at a lower table, of the meal, were withdrawing; and Oswulf was debating with himself whether he should join *them*, or retire immediately to bed, that, in one way or the other, he might escape the din of the accursed catgut, as he phrased it, and the presence of the more accursed thrumster. Kentwina was giving some directions to the attendants; and Leofric was in the act of rising, that he might

take his seat by the fire, when the blast of a horn at the northern gate aroused their attention.

"In the name of St Winifred! whom can we have here at this time of night?" cried the Thane, surprised, as were all the rest, at a summons so unusual: "Some new Exeter job? for I think that horn has not sounded at this hour since the night that Ealstan of Tiverton rode here, as if the fiend were at his back, to tell us that twenty thousand Danish horsemen had seized Exeter, and were overrunning the whole country. And a precious fool's errand was it for us, who were flashing and floundering about all night; scouring up arms, and filling the place with men to fight a handful of fellows thirty miles off that dared not venture from their own walls."

"It's Hulder, may be," said Oswulf, half turning his heavy head towards Leofric, "Eanfrid's huntsman. He promised to call for me, if he came by early enough.

"And if it be Hulder," replied Leofric, "methinks it bespeaks a good opinion of his own consequence, that he should make bold to disturb the whole household at this hour. But

here comes Oswald.—Well Oswald, what does it mean?"

"So please you," said Oswald, "there are two men at the gate, servants of the Earl of Somerset, who crave a night's lodging for their young master Sigifred, who has been thrown from his horse near to the house, and something hurt. He will be able to ride on to-morrow, they hope, in the carriage which they will fetch for him."

"Of a surety;" said Leofric, "conduct him immediately in: and bid Oswin put the supper again upon the table: and, of all things, let him not forget the boar's head, and the eel-pasty; for, if this youth be as his father was at the same age, he'll like nothing so well."

"Body o' me!" cried Kentwina, "what do you talk about? Boar's head and eel-pasty for a man perhaps in a burning fever? Tell Oswin to bring in the wheaten bread, and new honey, and mayhap a handful of figs;—and the lac-acidum for his drink. But has he any bones broken, Oswald? for my skill wont touch that: but we can send for brother Wiglaf, only there's

fear that he'll be for bleeding, and this is an unlucky day—"

"I believe he has no bones broken," said Oswald, "since his attendants expect him to return home to-morrow."

"Well, well,—cried Leofric impatiently; "away with you Oswald, and see him conducted safely in: and let Oswin bring the boar's head, and the honey and figs, and a cup of wine, and the lac-acidum all together, and then the youth may please himself."

Oswald went; and the stout Thane remained standing on the same spot, while he debated with himself of the manner in which he should receive the young nobleman.

"His father Ethelbert and I were unfriends," said he, muttering to himself,—but that was long ago; and mayhap we were both over-hot: he may have thought no more of it since than I have: and, if he have, what has our quarrel to do with his son, that I have never seen? He is a wild fellow, men say: but I had a touch of that myself at his years. He will not stay long with us; and then he comes to ask hospitality

at our hands; and is hurt into the bargain. I will go meet him myself, and make him welcome."

Having thus decided upon giving a friendly reception to the young nobleman, Leofric felt as if any appearance of less cordiality on the part of his family were a want of proper duty towards himself.

"Oswulf,—Edmund," cried he, "Why the fiend do you not stir, and give welcome to the young noble? and he hurt too. Come along with you, and show your breeding."

Oswulf arose sulkily from his seat, muttering that "he knew nothing about the chap," while Ethelburga hasted to acquaint her father that Edmund had left the room the instant that Oswald had been ordered to give admittance to Sigifred.

"Why now that's as it should be," answered the Thane, "and I like the lad for his ready good will. Come away with you Oswulf."

The jovial Thane left the chamber with a quick step, followed by his clumsy, and unwilling son; and soon after returned, supporting

Sigifred by one arm, while Edmund sustained him by the other. The young man had met with a severe sprain in the ankle of his left foot; but that appeared to be the extent of his hurt, since he felt no pain in any other part, and seemed in excellent health and spirits. He was laid upon a couch; and the good Kentwina was instantly busied in examining the injury, and prescribing for its cure; which she promised would be easy and quick. Certain herbs were immediately ordered to be gathered; and she herself superintended the fomentation of the swelled ankle and foot. During the preparation of these, Sigifred proved, by his attack upon the well-seasoned eel pie, and by two or three stout pulls at the wine cup, which he prefaced by healths to those present, and more especially to Ethelburga, that there was no great derangement of his internal functions; and talked with cheerfulness of his being able to return on the morrow. This was, of course, opposed by Kentwina, who thought he might perhaps fall into less skilful hands; and by Leofric, upon whom the lively look of the young nobleman, the

gay tone of his voice, and the heartiness with which he discussed his meal, and returned to the wine cup, had begun to make a very favourable impression. Edmund also suggested that it might be dangerous for him to attempt a removal so early, even in a carriage, since the roads were rough; and Ethelburga thought herself called upon to add her hope to those of her parents that the young nobleman would not quit them so soon. This was said by her with much modesty; and might, by another person, have been considered as a mere compliment exacted by politeness: but it appeared to have more weight with Sigifred than the far more pressing solicitations of the worthy Thane and his lady, for, during the remainder of the evening, he said not another word of his return; and once or twice even spoke in a manner which implied an intention to abide at least a few days with them.

A considerable portion of the attention of Sigifred was now directed to Ethelburga; and was evidently not disagreeable to her. There was a frankness, and a cheerfulness, and an air

of gentility, in the young man, which, assisted by a very handsome countenance, and a dress of the first elegance and richness, made him commonly a favourite with females at first sight. His hair, which was of a deep black, hung on his shoulders and the sides of his head, in curls so thick as almost to hint that art had assisted nature: his eyebrows were finely arched above eyes dark, full, and sparkling; his nose was slightly curved; and his lips had an almost continual smile of perfect good nature. By the custom of the time, it was forbidden to the clergy to wear beards; but an unlimited freedom of choice in this respect was allowed to all other men. Accordingly we find, from the Anglo-Saxon drawings which remain to us, that, of the full grown, and elder men, most retained, and a few cut off their beards; while, among the younger men, the wearing of a beard was very unusual. Sigifred was one of the exceptions to the common custom. He was at this time twenty years of age; and his short, curly, dark beard, divided and ending in two points at the chin, according to the universal fashion, agreed well

enough with his clear brown complexion, and the luxuriant ebon locks that enveloped his head and shoulders. The hair upon the upper lip was not worn till at a later period; and in this respect he was no exception to the common usage. His teeth were perfectly white, and, from his almost continual smile, a good deal shown. His person was above the middle height, elegantly formed, active and strong; and his whole air and manner expressed the self-possession, and easy dignity, of one trained up in the highest class. His conversation was fluent, and sprightly; and denoted occasionally an acquaintance with the politics of the day, which the family of Leofric were little accustomed to meet with.

His father Ethelbert had been among the chief of those who led the conspiracy by which Ethelwulf had been removed from the throne, to make way for his son Ethelbald: and during the subsequent dispute about his succession to the subordinate kingdom of Kent, vacant by the death of Ethelstan, it was, that Leofric, the stanch supporter of Ethelwulf, had come not unfrequent-

ly into hostile collision with the fierce and proud Earl.

As a king's thane, it was the right, and the duty of Leofric, to attend the assemblies of the Witenagemot, or parliament of the time: but, except upon extraordinary occasions, the attendance of its members was not compelled; and the disinclination which Leofric had long felt to busy himself with politics, had caused him to absent himself from the meetings of that body; and thus it was that he had not for years come into contact, either hostile or peaceful, with his former opponent.

Ethelbert, however,—a powerful and influential noble,—was deeply engaged in the party, or state, questions of the day: and his office of Herotoch, or military leader of the county, invested him with great consequence, and kept him in a state of active communication with the stirring spirits of the time. He was not, however, held to be in much favour with the reigning monarch, Alfred,—since that time dignified with the title of "the Great,"—because the chief object of the rebellion, which he had so mainly

aided, was to prevent the avowed intention of Ethelwulf to place the young Alfred upon the throne of Wessex, in preference to his elder brothers Ethelbald and Ethelred.

It was natural enough that common minds should attribute to Alfred unfriendly feelings towards one who had opposed his passage to the throne: and the unfavourable manner in which Ethelbert was known to speak of Alfred confirmed their opinions. It seemed, nevertheless, strange to them that the king should permit a man whom he hated to retain a dignity and power of which he might on any day deprive him. The office of Herotoch was not hereditary; and Alfred might, at his sole pleasure, have transferred it to other hands: yet he had not done this; and so far his conduct to the Earl contradicted the received opinion of his hostility towards him. But the mind of Alfred was ages in advance of those with whom he lived; and he shared the fate inseparable from such superiority,—in what manner soever it may be exhibited,—that of being, for a time, misunderstood, and despised. Ethelbert was not one of those who knew how to es-

timate truly the character of Alfred: and in his school it was that his son Sigifred had formed his creed of politics, and imbibed a taste, and capacity, for political conversation.

It is not our intention to detail here any portion of the discourse of the evening upon that subject; but we have thought it right to mention this tendency to "talk of state affairs," as a feature in the character of Sigifred; and to hint at the direction taken by his opinions, because upon the mind of Edmund,—at this time totally unoccupied by previous notions of politics,—they had for a while considerable weight. The familiar acquaintance which Sigifred exhibited with the distinguished persons, and the great events, of the day, gave him much importance in the eyes of the whole family: and though Leofric occasionally maintained with sufficient sturdiness his own opinion upon any question, yet he listened with much pleasure during the greater part of the time; so that Sigifred appeared to great advantage as the undoubted *Lion* of the night.

Kentwina, it is true, contrived, now and then, to mingle her medical, with Sigifred's political

science; but she never managed it so skilfully as to retain her hold for more than a short time. This she thought rather hard; for the physician likes to feel his ascendency above the patient; and she, accordingly, felt it as a diminution of her importance when the inestimable virtues of *rudan*,* or *hwite hare hunan*, † or *grundeswylian*, ‡ seemed instantly forgotten in a question respecting the probable fate of Mercia,—or in a story of deadly feud betwixt the Earl of Wilts and the Earl of Dorset.

Edmund rarely spoke, unless to put some modest question, or to offer some possible palliation of imputed mal-conduct in persons of whom he, nevertheless, knew nothing. Ethelburga said not a word,—except now and then in answer to something addressed immediately to her, but her eyes were fixed upon Sigifred, and her attention wholly devoted to him.

Oswulf understood little of what was spoken; and remained in stupid silence, excepting on one occasion when, in reply to something directed to him by Sigifred, he took an opportunity to

* Rue. † White horehound. ‡ Groundsel.

speak of the dog-fight which he was to attend on the next day, and of the qualities of a noted bull-bitch, bred by himself. But, though he had no ear for the conversation, he had an eye quite at leisure to take note of his company; and saw with great delight that his hated foe occupied a far less conspicuous station among them than was his wont. He saw also, and with still greater pleasure, the marked attention paid by the young noble to his sister; and the delighted eagerness with which she, in return, listened to his conversation. He had been long aware of the prevailing opinion that Ethelburga would sometime become the wife of Edmund: and, as he would rather have plunged a dagger in the heart of one, or perhaps both of them, than witness such an union, he immediately conceived a hope that Sigifred might become an impediment to it. To his surprise and vexation, however, he could detect in Edmund's look or manner, nothing that savoured of jealousy; though he had more than once been assured that the hated youth had remarked the extreme pleasure, and the unusual intensity of interest, with which

she listened to the discourse of Sigifred. It was, however, only by the direction of his eye, and by the gentle smile which followed it, that Oswulf could read Edmund's notice of her fixed attention; and the boor could, therefore, make nothing out of it. He, however, continued to watch, and to hope; and at last so far enlisted himself on the side of the young noble that he determined, on the following day, to christen a most promising mastiff-puppy by the name of Sigi.

One of the chambers of honour was at length assigned for the repose of the young nobleman, who was carefully assisted thither by Edmund, and one of his own servants, who had remained to wait upon him: and, after Leofric had solemnly shared with him the sleeping-cup, and Edmund had wished him sound rest, and a speedy recovery, all departed to their beds.

That night Leofric dreamed of the Earl of Somerset—of old times, and party-struggles; while the visions of Kentwina were of herbs and drugs; and of a furious dispute with Leech Wiglaf, who was for curing a sprained wrist,

which was somehow at the same time a confirmed lungs adl, by plastering the toes with a decoction of Latin words. Edmund's dreams were of the feeble king,—of battles, and of councils, and of hair-breadth 'scapes from the hands of the Northmen; and Ethelburga, after lying long awake, fell into a sound slumber, and dreamed of Sigifred.

CHAPTER X.

Oswulf was up with the dawn; and, as he helped himself to divers large slices of cold meats, took care to whisper in the ear of the larderer, that the Earl of Somerset's son "had fallen desperately in love with Ethelburga at first sight; and that she liked the paring of his little finger better than t'other's whole carcase,—*he* was sure she did: so that the vagabond monkling would be done at last; and might then go hang himself, so soon as he was worth a rope."

This he repeated to the pantler, who helped him to his wheaten bread,—and to the cellarer, as he partook with him of a huge horn of the strongest ale: he told it to the groom who brought his horse,—and to the huntsman who was to be his companion in the day's sport: he whispered it to every domestic, whether slave, or freedman, whom he met; and added that,

"so soon as Ethelburga was married, and Edmund turned out of the house, he would give them all a feast, and make every man, woman, and child, as drunk as a gleeman at a burying."

The whole house was speedily in a ferment at this intelligence, which, having been communicated by Oswulf as a secret, preyed like a crime upon all consciences, till they could find relief by confessing it as fast and as frequently as possible. There was, accordingly, a most unusual necessity on this morning for going out: one to the hamlet of Cothelstone,—another to a sister, or a brother, or an aunt, or a grandfather, that lived at hand; *this* to the priory, and *that* to the village of Bishop's Lydeard, about two miles off;—but every one had satisfactory reasons to assign for going; and it was observed by the gate wardens that every face had an unusual expression of importance, and every foot a more than common alertness of motion.

Before the second hour of the morning, the news of the intended marriage of the Earl's son, and the rich thane's daughter, shot in all directions, like so many rays of light from the central

luminary at the castle, to every house and cottage within three miles of it. Some would not believe,—while others named the day fixed for the wedding: many pitied Edmund, but thought it would be a capital match for Ethelburga; "and then, mayhap, the young Earl would settle at the castle, and rare doings there would be." The theows hoped to become freedmen; the maidens beheld new kirtles awaiting them; the holders of land thought they could espy lighter rents; and, though all had loved and respected Edmund when he appeared in the glory of the thane's favourite, and expected son, yet, now that he passed before their mind's eye as a poor and discarded adventurer, many began to debate within themselves as to the exact depth of the bow which it might thenceforward be necessary to make to him; whether a touch of the hand to the cap would not do quite as well as the complete uncovering of the head; and whether "*master*" might not do for him now instead of "*Sir Edmund.*"

The unconscious three, meantime, with Leofric and his lady, sat at their substantial break-

fast, and every face was cheerful among them. The ankle of Sigifred was somewhat more swollen and painful than on the preceding night, so that his return was out of the question, even had he desired it; but he was in excellent spirits, and full of pleasant, if not very profound, talk. There appeared an unusual sprightliness in Ethelburga; Leofric seemed to take down his beef and strong ale with more than customary zest; Kentwina smiled more frequently than was her wont; and Edmund's face had more than its usual animation.

This last fact rather puzzled the attending domestics,—who were of course fully informed of the intended match, though of the parties principally concerned not one had ever dreamed of such a thing: they could well enough understand how all the others should appear more than usually cheerful;—but, that the loser should be in as good spirits as the winner, seemed very odd indeed. Their observations were communicated regularly, as they left the room, to the domestics without; and most profound and contradictory were the cogitations that occupied the

bosoms of the whole household. It *was* remarked, however, that Ethelburga had not walked as usual with Edmund before breakfast; though no one had thought proper to recollect that, in consequence of their having retired to rest later than usual, all had likewise risen later; while the meal had awaited them at its fixed hour; and that, consequently, whatever might have been their inclination for their customary exercise, they had not had time to indulge it. It was also observed that no ride had been proposed for any hour of the day; and the necessary inference was, that Ethelburga did not like to leave the young nobleman, and did not choose to ride with Edmund. But then,—Edmund had behaved with such kindness to Sigifred, and to Ethelburga,—and had spoken so cooly of an intended walk to the priory, that he might confer with his father Cynewulf,—during which time he must, of course, leave Ethelburga entirely to his rival,—that it could not be thought he felt any jealousy, or apprehended any unpleasant consequences. In short, the aspect of affairs was altogether puzzling; and Beorna herself, the lady's tire-

woman, who possessed the most fluent tongue in the house, and was supposed to know most of what was going forward in the family, declared, after she had turned it every way in her mind, that "she could tell no more than her crisping irons what would be the upshot of it all."

But more wonders yet awaited them.

It was still early,—for the morning meal was only just concluded,—when the sound of a horn at the southern gate was heard; and, presently after, a lady on horseback, followed by four mounted attendants, and a carriage drawn by two horses, were seen coming through the court.

Edmund, who first beheld them from the window, briefly apprized Leofric of his visitors, and then hasted unbidden to assist the lady to dismount. Leofric was rising that he might himself go to offer this courtesy; but he lingered for a moment that he might transfer to his mouth one delicious morsel, which might else have been lost to him, and in that moment his purpose had been anticipated. Continuing therefore the active motion of his grinders, he contented himself

with looking through the window, and making brief comments upon what he saw.

"A beautiful young woman as ever was seen with eye!" said he,—"but her face is strange to me,—and yet,—look out Ethelburga,—and as fine a grey she rides as ever champed steel bit. Do you know her, girl?"

Ethelburga had never before seen her.

"By St Withold, Master Edmund, but you have a delicate burthen there! See how the fool blushes: and, by my faith, she reddens as much. But here they come; and we shall soon know all about it. The carriage is empty, Sir Sigifred; and, now that I look better, methinks these men should be the attendants of the Earl your father."

"By my life then;" cried Sigifred, "it is my sister Elfrida. The knaves should not have let her know of my accident."

At this moment the door opened, and a lady, richly habited, and of dazzling beauty, entered. In her right hand she carried a riding whip, which had a handle of ivory, twisted with gold, and a knob cut into the form of an eagle's head.

For the lash, there were three strong silken strings, each terminating, instead of a knot, with a small bead of ivory. The length of the handle was about a foot and a-half, and that of the strings the same. Her upper dress was an ample crimson robe, wrought of the costliest wool, and reaching to the ground. This was partly open in front; and showed beneath it a kirtle of deep blue silk, richly embroidered at the hem, and having, just below the knee, a broad band of gold. Her head and neck were enveloped in a hood, or veil, of thick purple silk, wrought with flowers of silver and gold. The sleeves of her upper robe were wide, and came down just below the elbow; beneath which were seen the close sleeves of her kirtle, bound at the wrists with bracelets of gold. Her shoes, which were of sea-green silk, fitted close round the ankle, and had gold edged slashes, extending from the instep almost to the toe, beneath which appeared silken stockings of a pale rose colour. Her face was flushed with exercise; but expressed much anxiety.

Advancing hastily to the couch of Sigifred, as if unconscious of the presence of any other

person, "Are you much hurt, brother?" said she,—"tell me at once the worst."

"Nay Elfrida," he replied, with a gently reproachful tone, but at the same time smiling, and extending towards her his hand,—"you should not have done this. I am scarce hurt at all: a slight twist of the ankle, nothing more. How durst the villains alarm you in this way."

The look of her brother, and his first words, reassured the lady; and she instantly turned to those around her, and, with exquisite grace and dignity, apologized for her hasty entrance, and abrupt address; which, however, she trusted their kindness would impute to her extreme anxiety respecting her brother.

The excuse was accepted; the board was replenished; and the lady was entreated to honour them by partaking of the meal, and by remaining their guest as long as it might be agreeable to her.

It is unnecessary to detail the conversation that followed. Elfrida briefly stated the necessity of her return that day, since the Earl was absent from the castle: but readily consented to

her brother's remaining for a few days with those who had given to him so cordial a reception. It is not, however, so unnecessary to say a few words upon the lady herself, since she will hereafter occupy some portion of our pages. By one, indeed, who had observed the look with which Edmund regarded her almost unceasingly, it might have been predicted that she must continue to occupy his thoughts during the whole long volume of life. And, if her mind should prove to be matched with the glorious frame that held it, well might such an one have said, that the shrine richly deserved the unbounded devotion of its worshipper.

In truth, before an hour had elapsed, a report was rife throughout the whole domestic establishment, that the discarded Edmund had fallen, at the first sight, deep in love with the beautiful daughter of the Earl: and his presumption and insolence were, of course, pronounced to be abominable. There were, however, some who had other notions about the matter; and especially when those who had returned from the apartment affirmed, that the lady, though she sat like

a queen, spoke now and then to Edmund as if he had been a prince, or a nobleman at the least: and that she had been more than once observed to blush as red as the ruby upon her bosom when she perceived his eyes fixed upon her. It was altogether a strange business: and yet every one agreed that for an unknown youth like him, dependant, as they said, upon the charity of the thane, to think of wooing an Earl's daughter, was as wild a chase as if he should expect to run down a stag with gyves on his feet. The whole affair was, nevertheless, canvassed in all its possible bearings; and Beorna was heard repeatedly to exclaim that "she thought the world must certainly be coming to an end."

The beauty of Elfrida was of a character totally different from that of Ethelburga. She was tall and majestic in person; and had a look that by some was termed haughty, and by others noble. After she had,—in so far accepting the invitation of Leofric as to agree to pass with them the greater portion of the day,—removed the veil from her head and neck, she discovered a profusion of curled hair, of a deep golden hue,

and a serene forehead, white and smooth as ivory, broad, capacious, and lofty. Her eyes glowed beneath their finely arched brows, blue and bright as sapphires. Her nose was of that class, broad-ridged, firm, and with a nostril somewhat long, and slightly curved, which Lavater, in his enthusiastic way, has pronounced to be worth an empire. Her lips were rather protuberant, rose-tinted, and teeming with an expression of intelligence, and haughty sweetness. A crowd of dimples in perpetual motion, like to a clear calm water when gently fanned by a breeze of June, gave to her smile a witchery, more potent, than any spell of magic, to kindle life in the deadest observer. Her chin also was slightly dimpled, and exquisitely turned; her neck was stately, round, and full; her bosom, so far as the modest costume of the times permitted to be seen, was white and smooth as alabaster. A heavy necklace of gold, suspending a costly ruby, hung down upon her bosom: in her ears, of the finest form and finish, she had rings containing some sparkling gem of a pale-green tint; and rings of gold, with precious stones upon three

fingers of either hand. Her complexion was clear, with the lily and the rose softly blended: her voice was music: her motions were grace, and dignity.

Such was the lady on whom Edmund, all unconscious of the cause, and unapprehensive of the consequence, gazed with sensation which she had never before experienced. He felt like one who suddenly finds himself looking upon a landscape of unexampled beauty and grandeur, beneath a summer sun; and inhaling an atmosphere filled with the richest, but most delicate, perfume. He felt the inexpressible charm, and enjoyed it without a dream that sickness, or danger, might follow it. He drank of the delicious wine, and knew not what intoxication might ensue.

After a few hours had passed, during which Edmund had seen with pleasure the growing intimacy betwixt the noble stranger and his beloved Ethelburga,—the two ladies retired to refresh themselves with the warm bath, a luxury held in high esteem, and considered almost as a necessary of life by the Saxons of the higher

ranks; and our hero, at their departure, felt himself uneasy and alone, though Leofric and Sigifred remained, and were engaged in cheerful conversation beside him. But he only felt an unusual restlessness, and did not even attempt to guess at its cause. After, however, his silence and absence of mind had been once or twice good-naturedly noticed by Leofric and Sigifred, he began to bestir himself, and to think of what he had to do: and, therefore, as he had early in the day mentioned his intention of walking to the priory, he at last determined to set out.

His design in going there had been to consult with Father Cynewulf upon the political questions which had occupied the preceding evening; but he was now aware that his interest in these had suddenly become less warm than it had been. For this he did not try to account: he merely felt it; and also that he had less inclination than before to his walk. That this disinclination arose in any manner from his reluctance to leave the house, or any thing in the house, of Leofric, he was not conscious: nor

was he conscious that his ultimate determination to prosecute the walk was at all influenced by his knowledge that, until the hour for the mid-day meal, Elfrida would not return to the apartment. Forth, however, he went: but, suddenly changing his mind, after he had proceeded a short way, turned to the left, and began to ascend the hill of Cothelstone; promising to himself more pleasure in the enjoyment of the magnificent prospect from its height, than in the discussion of state affairs at the priory.

But even this beautiful scene had less than its usual delight for him. He looked upon the Eden-like vale on the south,—and toward the immense plain on the east, where its farthest point, a two days journey off, seemed like a dim cloud,—he turned to the west, where rose the distant heights of Dartmoor, crowned with vast forests,—and towards the north, where lay the quiet sea, ridged by the blue mountains of Wales;—but the point which most attracted his eye was the fine, but barren, hill of Castle Neroche, beyond which, at the distance of a few

miles, he knew that the castle of Ethelbert was situated.

Of the grandeur of this building he had heard much; but he had never yet beheld it; and he felt a sudden and strong curiosity to judge for himself whether or not it merited the admiration which it received. He could distinctly see the road winding down beside the Roman intrenchment, upon the summit of the hill; and, in fancy, he could view the noble figure of Elfrida, upon her beautiful grey steed, descending the steep declivity. It occurred to him then, that, not to have personally visited that fine Roman encampment, was discreditable to an educated youth like himself, who had for six years dwelt within ten or twelve miles of it: and besides,—the view from it must be very grand, and commanding. In short he was convinced that he ought to go there; and determined to mention his wish to Leofric so soon as he returned home.

But the bell of the priory below, which announced the hour for the mid-day refection, arose with a mellowed clang, and reminded him

that, in a short time afterwards, a similar summons would demand his presence in the castle of Leofric. He descended, however, with a speed more than usual, or necessary; and was delighted to find that Elfrida, with even greater bloom and freshness of beauty than before, had just entered the dining apartment with Ethelburga.

He had made no change in his dress, for custom did not demand it; but we must admit that he had retired for a short time to his sleeping room; and there combed out his golden curls, with somewhat more than usual care.

For the satisfaction of the curious in such matters, we shall briefly describe the appearance and manners of a Saxon dinner party.

The dining table was oblong, and rounded at the ends. The cloth was a rich crimson, with a broad gilt margin; and hung low beneath the table. The company sat upon chairs with concave backs, and were arranged, much as at the present day, with the view that to each of the ladies should be assigned a neighbour of the other sex. At the head of the table sat Leofric,

with Ethelburga at his left hand, and Elfrida at the right: at the lower end was Kentwina, with Sigifred at her right, and Edmund at her left. The latter had therefore the pleasure of offering to Elfrida the little courtesies of the table, and of drinking to her with the usual "Waes hael, Lady Elfrida," and of receiving in return the counter pledge of "Drinc hael, Sir Edmund."

The dishes consisted of fowls and fish; of the flesh of oxen, sheep, deer, and swine, both wild and domestic, not excepting certain portions of the sea-swine, or porpoise,—a food not at present much in repute, but at that period no unfrequent article of diet. There were two *sanda*, or dishes, of *sodden syflian*, or soup bouilli; and one of *seathen*, or boiled, goose. The bread was of the finest wheaten flour, and lay in two silver baskets upon the table. Almost the only vegetable in use among the Saxons was kale wort: and the only condiments were salt and pepper.

These various articles were boiled, baked, or broiled: and were handed by the attendants upon small spits to the company. *

* The chief articles of food among the Anglo-Saxons

If it should be thought that we have placed before six persons an unnecessary number of

appear to have been eels, and swine's flesh, cooked in a variety of ways. It was no uncommon custom at this period to make grants of, or to pay rents with, a certain number of eels. Gale, Scriptores, Vol. iii. p. 477, mentions two grants, each yielding 1000 eels: and a yearly rent of 2000. At page 456, of the same volume he notes a yearly present of 4000 eels from the monks of Ramsay to those of Peterborough. In Dugdale, Mon. p. 335, we find it stated that 20 fishermen furnished a monastery with 60,000 eels every year. The number of swine fed in the country was so immense as to constitute a principal portion of the wealth of the landed proprietors. In Turner's Anglo-Saxon History, Vol. iii. p. 24, we find this mentioned. "The country," says he, "in all parts abounded with wood: and woods are not often particularized without some notice of the swine which they contained, or were capable of maintaining. They also frequently appear in wills. Thus Alfred, a nobleman, gives to his relations a hide of land, with 100 swine: and he directs 100 swine to be given for his soul to one minister, and the same number to another: and to his two daughters he gives 2000 swine. So Elfhelm gives land to St Peter's at Westminster, on the express condition that they feed 200 of these animals for his wife."

dishes, we need only say that a Saxon of the ninth century liked good living quite as well as an alderman of the nineteenth: and though Edmund, or Elfrida, or Ethelburga, may have been contented with partaking of two or three of them, yet our authorities inform us that Sigifred, and the good Kentwina, took morsels from at least twice that number; and that Leofric was empowered to offer an opinion upon nearly all of them. These viands were assisted in their passage by drinks of several kinds.

The Saxons had three sorts of ale, the *lithes aloth*, or mild ale, the *welisces aloth*, or Welsh ale, and the *hlutres aloth*, or strong ale: to which last the stout thane adhered without thought of change. They had also wines, of home, and of foreign production; *morat*, a sweet drink made of honey diluted with the juice of mulberries; mead, cyder, and *pigment*, an odoriferous liquor made of honey, wine, and spiceries of various kinds. Instead of forks, which were not used in England till James the First's time, when Tom Coriate introduced them from Italy, our ancestors made use of their fingers: but, for the

sake of cleanliness, each person was provided with a small silver ewer containing water, and two flowered napkins of the finest linen. Their dessert consisted of grapes, figs, nuts, apples, pears, and almonds: and, with such a bill of fare, our readers will, we trust, be satisfied that the entertainment was sufficiently ample, at least, though perhaps it may not have been tricked up with all the niceties of modern cookery. When, however, we add, that Leofric had himself given precise directions for the management of a few of those which were held to be the most choice, and least common, dishes, we do hope that even the much respected aldermen A. B. and C. will banish from their minds all uneasy doubts upon so important a point.

Dinner conversations, even in the momentous hour that gives them birth, are rarely of a very stirring kind; and what interest then could such be expected to have at the distance of a thousand years! We shall, accordingly, content ourselves with saying, that a finely seasoned venison-pasty, and certain savoury broiled rashers of wild-boar, introduced a conversation upon hunting, which

ended in mutual invitations betwixt Leofric and Sigifred to partake the pleasures of the chase, so soon as the latter should be recovered from his accident, upon the respective estates of Cothelstone, and of Castle Maximus. The invitation of Leofric was promptly accepted by Sigifred; but his counter invitation was for the present declined by Leofric, on the grounds that he rarely went so far from home, and that his acquaintance with the Earl, which had terminated in a hostile way some years back, had not as yet found an amicable renewal. From this determination of the thane not even the almost resistless eloquence of look and voice in Elfrida could move him: but upon Edmund its influence wrought very differently. He had also declined the invitation of Sigifred, because he felt little pleasure in the sports of the field; but, before the eye and voice of Elfrida, his opposition fell helpless; and he instantly expressed his acquiescence in her request, provided the permission of Leofric were granted him to do so. This was immediately given; and an arrangement as promptly made for his accompanying Sigifred

on his return. A new and delightful sensation thrilled through the breast of Edmund at the prospect of this visit; but he was even yet ignorant of its chief cause. He became, however, immediately more animated in look and conversation; and soon ventured to propose that, if the lady Elfrida were immoveably bent on returning that day to Castle Maximus, he might be allowed to attend her upon some part of the journey. This courtesy having been approved by Leofric, and accepted with due thanks by the lady, preparation was immediately made for their departure: and while the sun was yet high in the heavens, the little cavalcade issued from the gate.

CHAPTER XI.

It was with a novel, and a proud, feeling that Edmund found himself in the situation of companion and protector to the beautiful Elfrida. His face beamed with animation, and his conversation was joyous and intellectual. He did not then anticipate the flatness and insipidity of feeling that awaited him from the moment when he should be separated from her who, with a heart and countenance as gay as his own, and as little inquisitive into the future, now glanced rapidly upon her spirited grey steed past cottage and hamlet, the wonder and admiration of all who beheld her.

We may here state that the ancient Saxon fashion of riding was not materially different from that of the present day. Side-saddles, much upon the modern construction, were used by the ladies; but they had no dress answering to our

riding-habits, it being their custom to go forth without making any addition to their usual clothing, except the hood or veil, which has been already described. The different form of the riding-whip has also been mentioned. The Saxon saddle rose somewhat higher behind, and before, than that in present use; and was girthed over a cloth which extended from the shoulder to near the hips of the horse, and reached half way down his sides. This cloth was sometimes richly gilded at the margin, and of a gorgeous colour. The spur was of iron, brass, silver, or gold, according to the wealth or ostentation of the rider; but it consisted of a single point merely, the rowel not having been in use till the latter part of the thirteenth century.

On the present occasion Edmund wore spurs of gold; and the handle of his sword was richly inlaid with gold, and sprinkled with gems. His close coat was of the finest blue cloth, richly embroidered; and his short cloak of bright crimson, trimmed with gold, floated gracefully behind upon his left shoulder. He had upon his head a small cap of a rare and costly fur, lined with silk;

and in his right hand he carried a light, steel-pointed, lance. His horse was spirited, but completely under his control; and his appearance altogether was such as to make him seem a fitting companion for the beautiful and dignified creature at whose side he rode.

The way vanished before them; and the happy minutes glided swiftly by. They paused at length on the summit of Neroche; and Elfrida positively forbade her companion to go farther. "The castle of Maximus," said she, "is but a few miles distant; and less than half an hour's riding will bring me to it. I can have nothing to fear with my present escort; but you are alone; the sun will soon set, and you have far to go. Accept my thanks, Sir Edmund, for your courtesy, and for the pleasure that your society has afforded me. In a few days I shall hope that my brother will return, and that we may have an opportunity to repay, in your person, something of the kindness which we have received from the hospitable family of the good thane. Till then adieu, and the saints have you in their holy keeping."

For a moment Edmund could not reply to her: at length, with a face pale as death, he stammered out "farewell Lady Elfrida,"—and then, after a short pause, added, while a deep flush suddenly took the place of his momentary paleness, "But the thanks are for me to render, lady, and for you to receive. May the blessing of God go ever with you."

Elfrida paused a moment, and looked at him with an indescribable expression. It seemed as if she would have spoken; but she said nothing; and immediately afterwards rode hastily away, and soon disappeared beyond an angle of the road.

Edmund remained motionless till he had lost sight of her. He listened then for a few moments to the rapid tread of the receding hoofs: his heart beat violently: a strange sickness came over him: suddenly he spurred on his horse, turned the angle; and, just as they were again disappearing, caught one short glance of the little cavalcade. He had for an instant beheld the fine figure of Elfrida,—but she was now gone; and he had to commence his solitary

journey homeward. Yet he lingered still, and the last sound of the horses' feet had died off, before he turned, and rode slowly and sorrowfully homewards. The sun was fast descending, but he took no note of it; and darkness was gathering round him, before he began to reflect that he ought to hasten on. With a drooping head, he pursued his melancholy way: in thought he retraced every look, and gesture, and word, of the beautiful girl: a sense of loneliness came over him, such as he had never before felt; he thought with delight of the day when he should again enjoy the society of Elfrida; but he little knew the nature of his emotions, nor suspected that the shaft of love had so deeply pierced his heart.

He reached the mansion of Leofric rather late: and the image of Elfrida mingled with his prayers to Heaven.

Five heavy days passed by, and the period of his visit to Maximus Castle was at hand. Meantime, he had perceived that betwixt Sigifred and Ethelburga a daily increasing intimacy had arisen, which might probably, as was whispered to him, terminate in an union for life. But

this caused him no uneasiness. A marriage between the young nobleman and the daughter of the wealthy thane had, he thought, nothing in it that could be objected to by either party: and he was not selfish enough to consider what might probably be the consequence of such an event to himself; nor jealous enough to envy or dislike Sigifred for the chance of his obtaining a rich bride who, by common report, as he well knew, had been long assigned to himself. He respected and dearly loved Ethelburga; but it was with the love of a brother towards a sister; and his heart was too noble and pure to permit a thought of employing marriage as the mere instrument for obtaining wealth. Some slight uneasiness, however, he did feel when at times he fancied he could detect in Sigifred an impetuosity of temper, and an ill subdued pride, which might have disastrous consequences to the object of his apparent attachment. He was, however, too charitable in making allowance for human imperfections, to dwell long upon these failings in one who generally manifested towards himself a decided liking and esteem; and

who, moreover, seemed to enjoy, in an unusual degree, the good will, and the approbation, of those whose opinions he had always respected. Without displeasure, therefore, though with some little anxiety, he saw, at the moment of their departure on the next morning, that the lip of Ethelburga was pale, and that a tear stood in her eye. Sigifred seemed also not unmoved: but his spirits quickly rallied; and, ere they had ridden a mile upon their road, his discourse was a gay anticipation of the pleasures of the boar hunt which he designed for their amusement on the succeeding day. The two young men were splendidly habited, and on their high mettled steeds bounded gallantly along.

They did not draw bridle till they had reached the side of the Roman station on the summit of Neroche, where they alighted, and gave their horses to the care of the two attendants, that they might proceed on foot to make their survey.

"I marvel much, Sir Edmund,"—said Sigifred, as they entered, arm in arm, at the opening where had formerly stood the northern gate,—"that you have never visited a spot so interest-

ing as this; though to you it cannot, of a truth, have so strong a charm as to our family, who boast ourselves the descendants of the very man under whose eye the camp was formed."

"I have heard," said Edmund, "that it was the work of Maximus, who was afterwards chosen by the Roman legions in this island, in conjunction with the Britons, to be their emperor in the stead of Gratian, from whom they had revolted."

"You have been rightly informed," said Sigifred: "here was a strong detachment of his own legion stationed at the time when he was appointed to the empire: and from the port of Weymouth, the landward summits of whose high cliffs you may just discern, in the direction of my lance, did he take ship when he went over to Gaul, intending to extend his dominion in Spain, his native country. From that expedition he never returned: but he left behind him a wife, and three sons, from the eldest of whom we derive our descent. The palace which he built, and inhabited, still remains, and in a short time I trust, Sir Edmund, that you will stand in the very hall

which echoed to the shouts of the Roman officers when Maximus there accepted the throne which they came to offer him."

Edmund's look expressed a doubt of the correctness of this assertion, which he yet hesitated to speak openly.

"Maximus,—if my recollection be perfect," said he, "lived in the fourth century,—a distance of five hundred years,—portions of the original building probably ——"

"The whole, the whole,"—said Sigifred, interrupting him with a tone of impatience,—"as the walls stood when Maximus left them, even so stand they at the present day: and of this your own eyes shall shortly judge. Its own strength has been sufficient to guard it, at once from the hand of time, and from the assaults of any such force as hitherto has come against it. Probably the great popularity of its builder, and the respect shewn to his widow during the thirty years that she afterwards passed in it, may have saved it during the turbulent period of civil wars which succeeded his death: and in after years, long before our Saxon ancestors had overrun this part of

the island, an intermarriage betwixt Aldulphus, the third in descent from Maximus, and Cynedrida, a princess of Holsatia, procured for its owners, and the castle itself, a perfect security from assault. But the walls themselves, if you have any knowledge of Roman architecture, Sir Edmund, will, I think, best satisfy any scruples that you may still entertain. Let us now pursue our walk; and that must be but a hasty one, for the sun stands almost at noon, and I, for one, have no inclination to indulge antiquarian curiosity at the cost of my dinner."

"These were indeed a wonderful people!" said Edmund, looking around from the top of the inner vallum, "But I have often regretted that men are never so earnest in the pursuit of good to their fellow-men, as they are daring and persevering in the chase of conquest, and mis-named glory. Had the might of the Roman Empire been employed to humanize, and to instruct, the barbarian nations, instead of to subdue, and to trample upon them, how different had the state of man been at this day!"

"These regrets and lamentations," said Sigi-

fred, " are merely useless. Man is what he is: that which he is now, he always has been, and probably will for ever continue to be. It is the vanquished only that complain of the miseries of war; and they themselves would as keenly relish the game, and as loudly extol glory and conquest, could they once lift up, in their turn, the shout of victory."

" I fear," replied Edmund, " that you speak even too truly: yet I cannot but hope that our milder religion may in time teach man that he was created for nobler purposes than to worry and rend his own species, with a fury that even the wild beast of the desert cannot match."

" If that hope is pleasant to you," replied Sigifred, " I should be sorry to deprive you of it: but, look around you, and find, if you can, in the present day any proof of his amendment. The world is nothing but a great field in which the strong and the weak maintain an everlasting warfare: and till I see that the Christian delights less in the possession of power, and is more scrupulous of the means by which to acquire it, than the heathen whom he despises and

hates, I must perforce believe that the fierce instincts of man are too powerful to be controlled by any creed. Man is cold and passive when he assents to a belief, but when he seeks power, or wealth, or the gratification of desire, he burns and rages. What is the chance between motives of such unequal strength? The religion of Christ has existed now during nearly nine centuries; and yet, is there a country where the sword has slept?"

"It is a melancholy reflection," said Edmund, —"but we must console ourselves with the thought that, however evil may appear to prevail, yet all things are under the direction of a power, and a wisdom, and a goodness, that cannot err. Man can never see more than a small portion, yet he presumes to judge of the whole. Even now, may we not perceive some good fruit remaining after the ploughshare of war which God permitted to pass over this suffering land? The Roman brought with him the sword, —and its edge was sharp; but the pain passed soon away: he vanquished barbarians who would else have destroyed each other, but he

left behind him learning and arts that can never perish."

"Lay then that salve to your sore, Sir Edmund," said his companion, in a playful tone, "and, since we have now seen all, let us begone, or that cloud from the south-west may speedily favour us with a bath that we should rather miss than tarry for."

They went out then at the southern entrance; and, mounting their horses, soon came within view of the magnificent palace of Maximus.

"We have a disputed title to our castle," said Sigifred as they rode forward, "not, thank Heaven! as to our right of possession, but as to the name by which the place ought to be designated: and the question lies betwixt no less persons than our great ancestor on the one hand, and a holy saint on the other. Now, as we would not willingly give offence to either of the champions, we pay the compliment implied by the title sometimes to the one and sometimes to the other. The right of our illustrious progenitor to give his own name to the work of his own hands cannot be denied him; and we therefore ho-

nour his memory by retaining the original name of Castle Maximus: but then the good St Nicholas, —who, or what he was, his brother saints best know,—having fixed his name upon a church not far from us, and upon the snug valley, or Combe, in which the said Castle Maximus stands, lays in a claim to rebaptize the heathen walls, and we therefore sometimes indulge him by adopting the name of Castle St Nicholas, as being a part or portion of his undoubted estate of Combe St Nicholas. I hint this to you because, in speaking with our pious mother, you will do well to pay homage to the saint, while, in the ear of the Earl,—if we should find him at home, —Castle Zernebock would be just as agreeable as Castle St Nicholas. Allow me also to hint, that piety with my mother, and a liking to politics with my father, will be the surest passport to their respective good graces. I am myself sometimes disposed to envy that respectable Deity of Rome who is blessed with two faces; that I might have the power to show, at the same moment, an approving countenance to each. My mother I do not like to oppose, and my

father I dare not. So that, for the fear of Scylla on the one hand, and Charybdis on the other, I scarce know how to steer my bark; and am compelled, more often than otherwise I should, to keep clear of both. My sister Elfrida is a better sailor than I, for sunshine or storm, she holds on her own way, and has never yet suffered shipwreck."

There was in this speech something that strengthened Edmund's suspicion of the perfect uprightness of Sigifred's mind; and he replied to it in a tone of slight displeasure.

"It is not for me, Sir Sigifred, to question the propriety of the course which you have adopted: natural and right enough it is that you should seek to conciliate the favour of both your parents; and of the means for accomplishing this you are certainly your own judge; but, for myself, I trust that all the good will which, during my short visit, it may be desirable that I should meet at their hands, may be granted to the homely sincerity of manners in which I have been bred, and which I have hitherto found suf-

ficient for the obtainment of all the favour that I have sought after."

Sigifred looked hard at Edmund while he spoke this; and then exclaimed, as he drew up his horse, " By the beard of St John! or rather of St Nicholas, since we are just entering upon his proper estate, but you have the spirit of a martyr in you good Sir Edmund; and would rather die under cross looks, and tart speeches, than forsake your faith in the efficacy of blunt, straight forward words. Take your own course, however; and, if you run aground, or strike a rock, dont say that I refused to pilot you. But let us turn a little out of the road here for a better view of Castle Maximus: and you, Wada," calling to one of his attendants, " ride on, and say we shall be close after you, and as hungry as wolves. And hark you,—ride back instantly, and let me know if the Earl is at home. His lordship" he continued, addressing Edmund as they turned into a rough narrow lane, " has been some time absent at the Wittenagemot, now holden at Dorchester, but is daily expected home: and, however stout *your* vessel may be to go against

wind and tide, Sir Edmund, I must trim mine with due regard to the breeze that is likely to blow. But here we have old Maximus, or Nicholas; and I think you will find that report has not done him more than justice."

As he said this, they came to a sudden opening which gave a full view of the majestic pile: and Edmund was filled with a wonder and admiration at its size, and grandeur, which for a moment held him silent. This proud building has long since perished; and the very name of Maximus has been forgotten in the country that witnessed his glory: but a humble church dedicated to St Nicholas still stands on the spot where, since the period of our story, four of its predecessors have arisen and decayed. It is, however, not above twelve or fourteen years since the spade of a labourer opened to the light, which, for nearly eight hundred years had not shone upon it, a tessellated pavement, probably the floor of a bath, upon which the foot of Maximus may have trodden, and over which may perhaps have moved the graceful form of Elfrida.

CHAPTER XII.

The residence of Maximus appeared to have been designed at once for a palace and a fortress; combining the magnificence of the first, with the strength of the latter. It was of immense size, and built throughout with that beautiful stone which still continues to be dug from the quarries of Portland. The walls now looked dark with years; and the ivy had, in parts, been suffered to climb to its roof: there was also an appearance of dilapidation in the outer buildings, which did not quite agree with the assertion of Sigifred, that the walls stood as they had been left by Maximus. These, however, in the eye of Edmund, added only higher interest to the place; and he felt an instant, and eager desire to explore it. He was no critic in architecture; and had never till then beheld any specimen of Roman building: but he possessed in a

considerable degree that innate sense of the beautiful, to which must, at last, be referred our admiration of forms, and of colours, with all their combinations. Adventitious beauty may arise from a sense of propriety, or utility, or from the boundless class of mental associations: and things which, from the influence of those powers, have once appeared beautiful to us may, by an adverse operation of the same, become distasteful, or ludicrous, or even hideous: but that which, uninfluenced by any of these, excites in us the pleasurable emotion of beauty, is, to the human eye, beautiful, simply because the will of our Creator has ordained that it should be so. The mind of man has been so constituted as to receive pleasure from certain forms and certain colours, and these he calls beautiful: that mind might, doubtless, by the same Supreme Power have been so formed as to receive delight from forms and colours the very opposite of these; and, under such a constitution of mind, the objects that are now distasteful or ugly to man, might have been beautiful to him. He might also have been created without any sense

at all of the beautiful; in which case he would have perceived neither beauty nor deformity. Although it be admitted then that nothing is *in itself* inherently, positively, and eternally beautiful,—it must yet be granted that, to the mind of man, as at present contrived, there *is* a beauty, in forms and colours, which may be termed absolute, and everlasting. To the individual mind that which was beautiful may, by the force of association, become distasteful, and the ugly may become pleasing; but, to the mind of man, there is a beauty dependant upon no association, or approval of the understanding, but resulting solely from the adaptation of that mind to perceive such as beautiful. Our sense of the sublime is dependant upon widely different principles: but as this is an humble history of the fortunes of a Saxon youth, and not an essay on the Sublime and Beautiful, we must say no more upon the subject.

This susceptibility to beauty, Edmund, as we have already said, possessed in an unusual degree; and the noble forms which had delighted the Grecian and the Roman eye, gave instant

and keen pleasure to his. He beheld lofty walls, stately columns, and spacious porticoes, clothed in the dark magnificence of age : the grandeur of mighty Rome appeared to rise before him. After a brief view, however, he yielded to the impatience of his companion, and turned with him to pursue their way.

They were near to the castle when Wada met them, and informed Sigifred that the Earl had been at home two days, and was about to return to Dorchester immediately after dinner, which, he added, would be on the table almost directly. This information appeared to please Sigifred, who immediately pushed on at a quicker pace, somewhat to the regret of Edmund, who would gladly have made his first approach to so interesting a building with more leisure to observe and to feel its beauty and grandeur. The gates stood open to admit them by the causeway that intersected the double circumvallation ; and, after resigning their horses to the grooms, they passed into a grand, but somewhat desolate-looking portico, whose pillared sides echoed to their tread.

" We must hurry on now," said Sigifred, pas-

sing his arm within that of his companion "for a double duty urges me; one, namely, to the Earl, and one to myself. I must not appear at table with his lordship in precisely my present trim, which he would consider disrespectful to the Earl of Somerset, and I must not, by stopping to explain what appears so wonderful to you, lose the time for discussing what is so interesting to myself,—that savoury haunch of venison, namely, whose perfume, coming from the kitchen upon the wings of the sweet south, awakeneth delightful expectance in my stomach. Castle Maximus, Sir Edmund, hath lasted five hundred years, and may last as much longer: but dinner passeth away even in an hour. When the wants of the clay are satisfied, then will the spirit have double energy to take its flights."

Edmund made no reply; but looked upon the massive architecture with delight and astonishment. They entered the spacious atrium, or hall, which they crossed: turned then to the right, by a broad and lofty arched passage, into an open court, surrounded by a portico: one-half of this court they traversed, and then,

through another arched passage opening on the right, passed to the cubicula, or chambers. Into one of these, adjoining his own, Sigifred ushered Edmund; and, after an injunction to use all possible speed, if he designed to make much change in his present habiliments,—although this, he thought, would be quite unnecessary,—hastened away to perform for himself the same task.

The slight change of apparel that Edmund had thought sufficient for a visit which he supposed would be a brief one, afforded little opportunity for choice: and he had a short time to look round him before Sigifred summoned him to depart. His sleeping apartment was large and lofty, and the windows,—with the exception of a few panes, which appeared to be of some transparent stone, such as he had not before seen,—were of uneven glass. The furniture was not materially different from that to which he had been accustomed. He was proceeding to satisfy his curiosity by looking forth at the window, to which he had mounted, but had only time to get a glance of another spacious

portico below, when Sigifred entered, and hurried him away, just at the moment when a deep-toned bell was giving the signal for the meal. Hastily descending to the court, which Sigifred as they crossed it, called the Cavædium, they came to the suite of dining-rooms, or, as he designated them, retaining the original Latin names, the Triclinia, in one of which, a lofty and sumptuous-looking apartment, they found the board spread. Two ladies, in rich attire, with their backs towards the door, were looking out at the window as they entered: but, at the sound of footsteps, they turned round, and gave a pleased reception to Sigifred, who addressed them as mother and sister. There needed not this to make Edmund aware that he was in the presence of Elfrida. He no sooner caught a glance of her majestic figure than his heart, which had been rapidly beating as he approached the door, made a sudden and dead stop. Mechanically, however, he walked forward after his companion; but his tongue seemed for a moment paralyzed; and to the welcome of Cyneburga, to whom Sigifred introduced him as his

mother, he did not at first reply. She observed that his face was deathy pale, and snatched up a cup of wine, which she pressed upon him so earnestly that he could not refuse to drink of it. Elfrida meantime, who had remained behind her mother, now approached rather hastily, and, extending her hand, gave him welcome. The touch shot through his blood; but he quickly recovered himself, and was proceeding to apologize, when the Earl entered. After a somewhat cool meeting betwixt the father and son, and the exchange of a few words, Edmund, now in full possession of himself, was introduced to Ethelbert, and received by him apparently with much pleasure. In the moment following, however, the smile passed from his face, and its habitual expression settled upon it.

Ethelbert was now in his fifty-third year, and his deep brown hair was slightly touched with grey. In person he was tall and robust: his forehead was deeply wrinkled, and had an almost perpetual frown; his eyes were keen and severe; his lips generally compressed. He had been handsome in youth; and Edmund observ-

ed that still there were some traces of resemblance between his stern features and those of Elfrida: but how different in that resemblance! the gloom of twilight, contrasted with the brightness of morning! He appeared to be one who could admit of few equals, and of no superior. There were written upon his face the characters of pride, vehemence, unbending sternness. His look was dictatorial; his voice was authoritative; his every motion bespake conscious power, and haughty self-esteem. His dress was rich, but not fanciful. He had nothing of the gayer ornaments with which younger, or vainer men, in his rank, might have tricked themselves; but the diamond upon his sword hilt, or the emerald buckle of his purple cloak, might have purchased the estate of many whose garments were more adorned than his with the fineries of fashion. He exchanged few words at the table with any one; and his face seemed never to relax, except toward Elfrida, and once or twice toward Edmund. To his wife he said little, though his manner toward her was not uncourteous. His own cold reserve seemed to infect all about him.

Few words were spoken; and the numerous attendants performed their office in silence. As the dish, or the cup, was presented, the bearer sank upon one knee; and did not rise till his service was no longer wanted. The Earl soon dispatched his meal,—drank one *waes hael* to his guest, and family,—pleaded haste, and went forth to commence his journey.

His disappearance had an effect somewhat like the cessation of a cold east wind: a thaw gradually followed; and, before evening closed in, the tones of Edmund's harp and voice, and the gay talk of Sigifred, produced in all a feeling like the coming on of spring. Cyneburga said little; but her face beamed complacent kindness towards all: Elfrida spoke less, but she sat like a goddess listening to the music of Apollo: and Edmund himself, in spite of his before-dinner-impatience to range through the whole of the magnificent castle, and to conjure up in imagination the shades of the mighty dead that had once dwelt therein, sat during the entire afternoon, and evening, without mentioning one word upon the subject.

When, however, Elfrida, with her mother, had retired for the night, a sudden curiosity seized him to behold the effect of the noble pile beneath the moon, then just at the full; and Sigifred so far humoured his romance as to agree to a walk through the Peristylium, and thence, from the Cyzican, or Greek hall, to the garden, at whose extremity they might have some indifferent view of the building. This offer was eagerly accepted by Edmund; and they soon found themselves again in the Cavædium. Here the bright moonlight, falling upon the northern, and part of the western, side of the spacious court, while the remaining sides were in contrasted darkness,—the deep stillness, save when broken by the reiterated echoes of their feet,—the rows of moonlit columns, standing out from the gloom beneath the long portico which they supported,—and the serene, star-sprinkled, heaven above,—struck upon the heart of Edmund a deep and solemn feeling, of a nature such as he had never before felt. He would gladly have remained to indulge this emotion; but Sigifred interrupted him.

"On three sides of the Cavædium, in which we stand," said he, "are the Cubicula, or chambers,—though we are, you must understand, rather desirous that our original Roman titles should be always assigned to every portion of the castle,—the Triclinia, or dining rooms, together with the Procæton, or room for the attendants, and the bath. At the western end, you see the Basilica, or place to administer justice: and, on either side of it, are the Pinacothecæ, or rooms for pictures and books,—a goodly case now for a very small jewel,—for I regret to say that the damps and the worms have nearly destroyed all. The name, however, lives; and therefore the said pictures and books ought to feel themselves quite satisfied, since they have, without trouble, attained that for which the greatest men have sacrificed their whole lives, and sometimes, at last, in vain. But we must pass these to reach the Peristylium."

While he said this, he led Edmund to an arched passage, on one side of the Basilica, having walked through which, they found themselves in the Peristylium, another, but far larger

court than those which they had before seen. Like the former, it was surrounded with a portico; but this was upon a larger scale, and supported by grander, and more richly ornamented, pillars. Its shape differed also from the two former; for, whereas the entrance portico had been circular, and the Cavædium a perfect square, this was a finely proportioned oblong. Edmund was lost in admiration, and astonishment. Beyond this court he beheld another hoary pile in moonlight and shade; and almost began to doubt if such things really stood before him, or if he were under the delusion of a delightful dream. All was dead silence, unbroken save by the voice of a small fountain in the centre, which sent forth a soft and unceasing murmur. The moonlight fell upon the dark, colossal Neptune, who leaned upon his broken trident, appearing to contemplate the stream that bubbled at his foot; and Edmund almost expected that the stony, but life-like, giant would come forward to question the intruders upon his privacy. Sigifred beheld his astonishment; and, for a time, refrained from disturbing him. At length,

however, reminding him that the hour was growing late, and that they must be up at sunrise if they would enjoy the amusement of the boar hunt, for which he had ordered every thing to be prepared, he took his arm, and drew him along, across the Peristylium, and close by the side of the bulky Neptune, a nearer view of whose countenance convinced Edmund that the gentleman had no thought whatever of entering into hostile colloquy with them.

"The building at the opposite end" said his companion, "contains the Œci, or halls, of which there are four orders, the Cyzican, or Greek, the Egyptian, the Tetrastyle, and the Corinthian. These you may see on the morrow, or whenever you will; but through one of them, the Cyzican, we shall pass into the garden; and, having made our circuit of this, it will be high time, Sir Edmund, that we exchange this somewhat chilly night air for the sleeping-cup and the warm bed."

They now entered a large and lofty room, in which, by the dim light, Edmund saw nothing

distinctly save the windows on either hand, and the rows of pillars that supported the roof.

"The Greek hall," said Sigifred, as they crossed it; opened then another huge folding door; and they went immediately into a spacious garden, glittering with dew and moonlight. Here Edmund beheld fountains, statues, fish-ponds, arbours, trees, shrubs, and broad and stately walks. Down one of the latter they walked at a brisk pace.

"You must content yourself," said Sigifred, "with one glance to-night. The old walls will be quite as glad of your company to-morrow evening by moonlight as now; and you will have more leisure to gossip with them. Hark! our very dogs chide us for not getting to bed, that we may be ready to follow them at daybreak. Stay,—from this point you may take your view, and pray content yourself with the briefest."

Edmund turned and looked back upon the gigantic mass, reposing in light and shadow. Till that day he had never beheld any thing which had the power to call up, as it were be-

fore his corporal eye, the shadowy forms of long past greatness. The sentiment with which the instructed human mind contemplates the works of those who have ages before mouldered in the earth, but who then, summoned by the spell of fancy, appear in solemn state to revisit the scene of their labours,—that sentiment which, when keenly felt, transforms the dry antiquarian to an enraptured poet,—had never till that day been awakened in the breast of Edmund; and he felt it with an intensity that amounted to awe. He could make no reply to the pleasantries of his companion; but, yielding at length to his impatience, walked reluctantly back, and again entered the castle. He felt slight inclination to join in the chase proposed for the morrow, but knew not how to decline accompanying his friend, who had probably intended it for his own particular amusement. He offered, therefore, no objection when Sigifred, parting from him at the door of his chamber, exhorted him to rise at the first summons; but, having promised compliance, and returned the good wishes of the night, threw himself upon his bed; and, after

an examination of his conduct and feelings during the day, and his customary act of devotion, fell into a sweet sleep, and dreamed of mighty Rome, and of a goddess there whose countenance bore a wonderful resemblance to that of Elfrida.

CHAPTER XIII.

The loud clamour of horns and hounds awoke Edmund before the sun was up : and, when he descended with Sigifred to snatch a hasty meal, he found Elfrida equipped for the hunt, and awaiting their arrival. He had not expected this ; yet could not but feel pleasure at the prospect of having for a companion a creature so lovely, and so majestically beautiful. He perceived, however, that her manner to him this morning was more reserved than it had before been ; and he felt as if he must unwittingly have committed some offence. But he had little time to reflect upon the probable cause. The horses were soon at the gate, the attendants and huntsmen were in waiting; and some three score deep-mouthed hounds were clamouring to be gone. Mounted upon a noble steed, at the left hand of Elfrida, while her brother rode on her right, he

felt, in the animation of the scene, the brightness of the morning, and the witchery of her looks and voice, a buoyancy of spirits which soon banished all uneasy thoughts.

The forest of Neroche ere long resounded to the clamour of the dogs, and the eager voices of the numerous huntsmen.

Several stags were started, but not chased, since the main object was an enormous boar which had three times already baffled pursuit. But it was now past noon; and the huntsmen had more than once expressed their despair of finding him, and counselled Sigifred to the chase of the next stag that should be started. To this he had just given his consent, when a tremendous yelling of the dogs, and the shouts of the foremost riders, gave note that the boar was aroused. In an instant all were in rapid motion: and Sigifred, clapping spurs to his horse, quitted his sister, and was soon at the head of the pursuit.

Edmund's impulses, when not kept under control, were far more vehement than those of Sigifred; but a chase of any kind was not one of

the occasions that could much awaken them; and, though he at first was about to follow the example of Sigifred, yet, when he perceived that Elfrida was striving to prevent her spirited horse from plunging after the rest, he curbed in his own, and again placed himself at her side. She had scarcely spoken to him for some time, but, having noticed this, immediately broke silence.

"Sir Edmund," said she, turning upon him her lustrous eyes, while a faint blush kindled in her cheek, "let me not, I pray you, think myself a hindrance to your sport. I shall incur no danger, and can require no protection. Forward, I beg of you, or Sigifred will rail at your hunting-craft,—or perhaps even suspect your horsemanship, or your courage, two qualifications, as I believe, of almost equal sacredness in the eyes of most men."

"He is welcome to suspect both, lady Elfrida," answered the youth, blushing even more deeply than herself, "till a worthier opportunity shall occur to teach him his mistake. I have been taught to hold in small esteem that courage which blazes vehemently upon every slight occasion; and am apt to suspect in it a disguised

cowardice. He that is truly courageous will sometimes dare to be thought cowardly; and, though I would not presume to rank myself among such, yet you will, I hope, allow me to say, that I would much rather be a suspected coward at the side of the lady Elfrida, than the most applauded champion at the head of a boar hunt."

"The lady Elfrida," replied she, "ought to be very grateful for the courtesy that you offer her; but would be loth to accept it upon such terms; especially when the sacrifice of your good name as a sportsman must be entirely without any useful end. Ride on then, Sir Edmund, I entreat you; or I may perhaps have to bear from my brother the blame of having been a clog upon your amusement. It is my custom to ride out at times with the huntsmen; but I never join in the actual chase, which is neither to my liking, nor, as I think, becoming to our sex. I have foolish notions, Sir Edmund, about the pursuing of animals to death for a mere pastime: and, as I am aware that in your eyes such a weakness must appear very contemptible, I would gladly be

spared the humiliation of feeling myself an object of scorn, or even of indulgent pity."

"You will not then," returned Edmund, "as so many others have done, cast the reproach of effeminacy upon me when I acknowledge to you that I am under the influence of these same foolish notions, and that I never without reluctance join in the chase, even of those animals whose strength and fierceness render them dangerous. Probably the contempt which you expected from me would be amply poured upon myself by your brother if he were to learn that, though I have frequently complied with the thane's request to attend him in his sports, I have never yet killed a single stag, fox, badger, wolf, or boar."

"Assuredly," said Elfrida, with a pleased smile, "he would rate your courage and accomplishments at the very lowest; and I recommend it to you to preserve the secret of your degraded state. Nevertheless, Sir Edmund, as the object of the present chase is one who has shewn little respect for either the lords or the ladies of this creation, having actually caused the death of one woman who chanced to meet him on the confines

of the forest, and of two men, less harmlessly disposed, who were in pursuit of him,—to say nothing of some half score of hounds, and as he will infallibly be hunted again and again till he has paid the forfeit of his crimes, I would, methinks, if I were a man, rather aid to destroy him at once, than leave him to an equally certain, but more protracted, death. I do not, however, if you lack the necessary skill, advise you to propitiate the esteem of Sigifred by entering into a personal contest with so formidable a brute; and perhaps I am disposed to think too well of almost the only one whom I have discovered to think like myself, not to feel some anxiety as to the result, were I to know that he might be exposed to such danger."

"That the lady Elfrida," replied Edmund, "would feel anxiety on his account, might, methinks, be spur enough to urge a duller spirit than mine to encounter peril; and reward enough for almost any fate that might attend him. I dislike the chase, because I hate the oppression by the strong of the weak: but, where the hunted prey seems itself to be the stronger, and the

more terrible, then may the chase be held rather as a war for the weaker side against the stronger; and, in such a cause, I have been taxed with being but too apt to take fire. And yet, after all,"—he added in a more grave tone,—" *is* this day's work the destruction of an injurious enemy, or the pastime of hunting? How cunningly do we seek to deceive ourselves, and to make our reason approve of the savage propensities of our animal nature!"

" Nevertheless, Sir Edmund," replied Elfrida, " you cannot, without giving an offence, and incurring a suspicion, for which I should be sorry, refuse to join my brother, who has, I must inform you, undertaken this day's sport, and selected this particular animal, almost entirely for your amusement: and we will, therefore, if you please, put on our horses; first begging you to understand that, as I counsel you to take such part in the business of the day as may spare my brother and yourself any unpleasant after-feelings, so I earnestly hope that nothing which I have said may urge you to meet greater risk than your skill and experience may warrant you

against. Guilty indeed should I hold myself if I thought that my rash counsel had brought evil upon any one: and doubly guilty if that one were himself so loth to inflict evil upon others. Perhaps" added she with a smile, " my remorse might be still the greater if that one were also he who has shown himself so *little* loth to inflict somewhat romantic compliments upon myself."

She touched her horse, as she concluded these words, and set out at as great a speed as the nature of the way permitted. They had, however, a considerable distance to ride before they came up with the hunters; for the boar, a swift and heavy animal, had easily forced his way through the thick underwood, which the dogs found it more difficult to penetrate, and had again continued his flight after he had cleared the obstruction, so that the hounds had not yet been able to overtake, and drive him back upon the hunters. The redoubled barking, however, which arose as Edmund and Elfrida drew nigh to the huntsmen, announced that the dogs were at last in the presence of their prey. A hideous yelling soon testified the reception which he was

giving them; and his own deep and savage *blurting* was distinctly audible amid the uproar of hounds and men. A gentle ascent, covered with thick bushes, as yet, however, hid the scene from Edmund and his fair companion; but, immediately on their passing this obstruction, they found themselves in a more open part of the forest, and easily beheld the whole before them. The boar, encompassed by the dogs, was about three arrow-flights from them; and all appeared to be rushing in the direction where they stood.

"Retire! retire! lady Elfrida," cried Edmund hastily,—"in a moment they will be here, and you may be thrown down."

In the instant that he spoke, however, the boar, having disabled three or four dogs that were heading him, and perhaps not liking the huntsmen who were coming on, turned suddenly round, and, ripping up all that approached, again held on his furious course, and drew after him the whole rout of dogs and hunters. The horse of Elfrida, at the sight of this general rush forward, became unmanageable; and, with a

loud neigh, bounding onward, in spite of her efforts to stay him, bore her speedily into the very thick of the pursuit. Edmund, in great alarm for her, instantly struck spurs into his horse, and gallopped at full speed after her.

"Are you mad Elfrida?" cried Sigifred, as she passed him, close on the heels of the dogs—"Stop!—stop!"

While he yet called out, he perceived that her horse was acting against the will of his rider; and, immediately giving his own the spur and rein, flew after her. In the same instant Edmund was at his side. "Sir Edmund," cried he, "where, the fiend, have you been?"

Edmund saw at a glance that his face was flushed, and his eyes bright and angry. "I will tell you presently," was the answer,—"let us first assist the lady Elfrida."

"She wants no assistance but mine," cried the hot youth; and, furiously urging on his horse, which was swifter than that upon which Edmund rode, shot instantly a-head, and, quickly overtaking Elfrida, stooped, and caught at her reins with such fury, while at the same moment he

checked his own, that her horse, making a sudden stop, threw her with violence to the ground. It was with difficulty that Edmund avoided passing over her. Almost before he had stopped his horse, he leaped to the earth; and was in the next moment beside her, in the very midst of the huntsmen, who were pressing eagerly and heedlessly forward. But for his shouts, and the waving of his spear, some of the horses would almost certainly have galloped over Elfrida, who lay, without sense or motion, on the spot where she had fallen.

Sigifred did not so easily arrest his steed; and, at the moment when he leaped down to fly to his sister, he perceived that the furious boar, whom the hounds had again headed, and turned back, was rushing directly toward him. His first motion was to fly to the aid of Elfrida, whom Edmund had just raised, and who, leaning upon his arm, was feebly climbing a mossy bank, crowned with thick bushes, that she might avoid the returning throng. He darted through an opening in the copse, and found himself in a deep and narrow path, or green alley, banked and hedged

thickly in on both sides. A few rapid steps brought him to a turn in the path: and shewed him that Edmund had just lifted Elfrida from the bank, and was supporting her upon the gnarled root of a dwarfish oak, which almost filled up the whole narrow breadth of the green lane. The feeling that accompanied Sigifred's first glance was a joyful consciousness that she was at least in a place of security, out of the track of boar, dogs, or horses; since, from the narrowness of the lane, the steepness of the banks on both sides, and the position in which she sat, or rather reclined,—effectually stopping up the path,—it would have been impossible that she could have escaped, had the terrible animal been driven in that direction. But this feeling, which requires many words for its explanation, was the sensation of a mere instant: and he had not taken one step towards Elfrida, when he heard a crash of the underwood behind him, and beheld the boar, covered with blood and foam, and flashing fire from his eyes, rushing toward him.

There was not, between him and the furious monster, more than the space of one spear-cast:

not a single hound had yet cleared the matted copse, through which the ponderous strength of the enraged brute had burst; and, though Sigifred might have leaped up the bank, and escaped the animal by leaving open the path for him, he could only do so with the certainty of abandoning Elfrida to perish. Exclaiming, therefore, "the boar! the boar! Sir Edmund, save my sister!" he planted himself in the centre of the path, and, firmly grasping his short, thick spear, awaited the attack.

With a hideous blurting, and gnashing of his tusks, the boar was almost instantly upon him. In the same moment, he heard the crash of his broken spear, and felt himself hurled with violence to the ground. He shrieked with horror, yet not for himself, but for his sister, left without protection save that of one wholly unable, as he believed, to render it. He strove to rise that he might hasten towards her; but instantly sank again, and became conscious that he had received a severe wound in the right leg. In one glance, however, he saw that Elfrida had been removed, and was standing with a terrified look

close to the bank, in a situation certainly more safe than before, but still liable to the most terrible injury, should the boar make a stroke with his tusks at her as he passed. Edmund, however, was no where visible; and Sigifred concluded that he had made his escape. "Coward!" he cried with the most bitter rage,—"nithing coward! I will kill him with my own hands!" But, before the words were spoken, something seemed to flash before his eyes;—he saw the boar fall,—roll over and over,—and finally lie motionless.

At the same moment Edmund, with his sword drawn, leaped from behind a bush of brambles which hung down from the side of the bank, and sprang towards him, just in time to save him from being run over by the whole pack of dogs who, having cleared the copse wood, were now in furious pursuit.

"Are you much hurt?" cried Edmund hastily to him.

"Ask me no questions," exclaimed Sigifred, fiercely,—"you must answer to me for your cowardice: my sister might have perished,—

she may still perish—the boar will rise and rush upon her yet.

"I think not," said Edmund calmly, "more especially as there are at the least a score of hounds tearing him to pieces. And the Lady Elfrida, I see, is coming towards you, apparently unhurt. Suffer me to assist you if you are resolved to rise;—but I fear your injury is greater than you suppose."

Sigifred, while he said this, was endeavouring to get up, with the assistance of the broken spear handle, and would not permit Edmund to give him any help.

"And if the Lady Elfrida *is* unhurt" said he, "small thanks to the coward who left her in peril of her life, that he might save his own!"

"I know of no such person," answered Edmund, "and I believe that you will regret your mistake."

"Nithing dastard!" cried Sigifred, as he at length raised himself and stood upright, "did you not yourself escape by climbing the bank, while you left my sister exposed to that horrible brute? Had he not so wonderfully fallen, and

lain stunned as he did, till the dogs came up, inevitably would he have destroyed her."

"Sir Sigifred," answered Edmund, with the utmost difficulty mastering the anger that boiled within him, "you have addressed me in words that are held to be expiable by blood alone; and you know that I stand degraded if I do not pursue a quarrel so begun to the mortal extremity: but you speak in ignorance of the truth, and under an agitation that robs you of judgment, and of self-control: you are also wounded, and in pain,—and I must therefore bear with you. Listen, however, for a moment, and you will then, I think, regret the rash and discourteous manner in which you have demeaned yourself toward your guest. The Lady Elfrida's weakness and alarm made it impossible that she could have clambered the steep bank, even with all my assistance; and there was not an instant to lose. I placed her where I thought she would be least in danger, and flew on to assist you: I beheld you fall, but had no spear with which to imitate your bold attack,—probably to meet with a similar ill chance;—my sword, however,

was in my hand; and, in the hurry of the moment, I thought I should better effect my purpose by inflicting an unexpected blow as the boar passed by me, than by openly confronting him with so inefficient a weapon. I leaped, therefore, behind a bush, which luckily hung over the bank, and skreened me from his view, and, in the instant that he shot by, was fortunate enough to strike him. Had I attempted, after your fall, to return to the Lady Elfrida, he must undoubtedly have overtaken me, and the result might have been less favourable to her."

"I see no blood upon your weapon;" answered Sigifred, "nor did I ever before know any man who could boast of having killed a wild boar by the single stroke of a sword. How the fiend then could either you or I look for such a chance? But the huntsmen, I see, have driven off the hounds, and the boar's hide will speak for itself. I think even now that your fancy has deceived you; and that the brute will be found to have broken his own neck. I will admit, however, that you have not deserved the

ill suspicion that I entertained of you; and I crave, therefore, that you will endeavour to pardon the extreme offensiveness of my language, spoken in a moment of mistake, and fury: but I must yet say that, however fortunate the result may have been, you deserve, as a huntsman, great blame for having left your proper weapon behind you, to the imminent peril of your own life."

"I dropped it," returned Edmund, "at the moment when I raised the Lady Elfrida from the ground; and you will, I think, admit that I had not time to fetch it."

"I begin to think," replied Sigifred, "that I have been extremely foolish in this business, if not a great deal worse: but here comes my sister, pale as a ghost, and she must be my mediator."

Elfrida, who had been hitherto unable to make way through the throng of dogs and men, now came hastily up, and, laying her hand with a gentle pressure upon the arm of Edmund, said faintly to him, "thank you! thank you!" Edmund was amply repaid.

Her anxious attention was then turned upon her brother, who was bleeding freely, and whose looks were certainly as ghost-like as her own. She compelled him to sit down, while, with part of the rich hood which she tore from her head, she firmly bandaged his wound.

During this operation, an explanation took place, which ended in a deep regret, on the part of Sigifred, that he had made so ungrateful a return to the preserver of his sister. Several of the huntsmen soon gathered round them, and in great surprise reported that the boar, though nobody knew by whom, appeared to have been killed by the blow of an axe, since the backbone was entirely cut through. Sigifred's apologies were at length as vehement as his indignation had before been: and it appeared long afterwards as if the basis had been laid of an attachment on his part toward Edmund, that could only end with life.

CHAPTER XIV.

It was two months before the wound of Sigifred was healed; and during this time Edmund was an esteemed guest in the castle of Maximus. He rode occasionally to Cothelstone to see his friends there; but never remained more than one night with them. Even the stern Earl, who returned after a fortnight's absence to the castle, appeared to show towards him more favour than to almost any other person. With his Lady Edmund became an especial favourite: and an attachment of a more tender, but infinitely more powerful, kind was, unconsciously to both, gradually, but rapidly, uniting the hearts of Edmund, and of Elfrida. As the nature and strength of this attachment was unknown to themselves, so was it also totally undreamed of by others. There was ever a profound respect in the heart of Edmund towards

Elfrida, which influenced his manner, and entirely prevented any approach to a familiarity which might have appeared offensive to her proudest relative. There was also a calm dignity in his carriage, which enforced the respect of all towards himself. He was happy, but little dreamed that this happiness would give rise ultimately to bitter misery. When, after the lapse of two months, he returned to Cothelstone, Sigifred accompanied him; and was the guest of Leofric for a week, during which time the liking which Ethelburga had conceived for him increased so much that his departure caused her much uneasiness. A frequent intercourse was speedily established between the younger members of the two families; and Ethelburga was twice permitted by Leofric to accompany Edmund to castle Maximus, where she remained during some weeks, and secured the favour of the Earl, and the love of all the rest of the family. The great wealth of Leofric was well known; and, although a meeting had never taken place betwixt him and the Earl, yet the latter contemplated without disapprobation the probable re-

sult of this intimacy between his son and the only daughter of the thane. It was not, however, without surprise, and something of supercilious pity for what he deemed a foolish weakness, that he perceived how easily Edmund seemed disposed to yield to Sigifred the chance of obtaining the rich bride who, as he soon learned, had been commonly supposed to be designed for himself. He was perfectly informed of the circumstances under which that youth had been received into the family of Leofric,—of his obscure parentage, and entire dependance upon the thane,—and could not therefore conceive that any thing short of the utmost ignorance of his own interests, could blind him to the advantage which he might have derived from a marriage with Ethelburga. Edmund's rare accomplishments as a penman and a scholar had, on two or three occasions, been found most useful to him,—for the proud Earl and statesman, like most of his compeers, could neither write nor read,—and his inference from this unusual learning and skill in such a youth was, that he must necessarily be, poor fellow! a mere genius, wholly given up to book-

craft, devoid of all honourable worldly ambition, and dead to passion. Little did he know the true cause of Edmund's indifference to the advantage of an union with Ethelburga: little did he suspect, under the profound homage which the foolish orphan paid to the daughter of the Earl, a burning and ever-increasing love, which deadened him to the attractions of all other women, and which was destined, eventually, to lift his aspirations to a height of ambition as unexpected, as it would be deemed insolent, and mad. Meantime, months passed on; the friendly intercourse between the families was gradually becoming more frequent, and more close; and it was confidently predicted by every gossip within five miles of Cothelstone, that the Earl would certainly be seen there, in a very short time, to propose a marriage between his son and the daughter of Leofric.

The Earl, however, did not come; and great was the marvelling thereat, and many and profound were the conjectures to account for the delay. Edmund, during this interval, was increasing in knowledge, and perfecting himself in all the

manly accomplishments of the time. He became, in an uncommon degree, dexterous in the use of every martial weapon; and his great strength, and activity, promised to render him a fearful opponent to almost any antagonist. His form and look became more manly: but the bloom had partly faded from his cheek; and his usual expression was a pensiveness amounting almost to melancholy. Various conjectures were started by the domestics as to the cause of this change in him. Some imputed his dejection to ill health; and yet they admitted that he was "as strong as a lion, and as active as a greyhound," so that this could not be the true cause: others thought that the continual animosities of Oswulf,—displayed upon every possible occasion, and in the bitterest manner,—preyed upon his spirits; and they only wondered that he never revenged himself for such insults, instead of passing them by, almost without notice: some again suspected that he was afraid of being abandoned by Leofric, so soon as the Earl should propose a marriage between Sigifred and Ethelburga; and others were sure

that he was dying for love of Ethelburga, but dared not show it now, because the Earl's son was likely to marry her. None had latterly said a word about his attachment to the lady Elfrida; because there was nothing in his manner toward her that agreed with their own notions of love-making, and because the idea of his ever presuming to think of her was just a mere madness. Since, therefore, it could not be ill health that made him so melancholy,—nor the hatred of Oswulf, whom he appeared only to despise and pity,—nor the fear of being turned out of doors, —for he was evidently quite as much as ever the favourite of Leofric and Kentwina,—nor love for the lady Elfrida, whom he never made love to,—it became at last the prevailing opinion of the household, headed by Beorna, that his smothered love for Ethelburga, aided no doubt by a liking for her riches, must be the true and only cause of his malady.

In this opinion they became more and more confirmed; firstly, by observing that he plainly showed towards her the same love, and the same attentions as he used to show her before

her acquaintance with Sigifred; which conduct, considering that the latter had been preferred before himself, was pronounced to be unnatural, and impossible, if he had not still remained desperately in love with her, and still hoped to displace his rival: secondly, by their noting that Sigifred,—for a reason which may hereafter appear,—had begun to show somewhat of a coolness towards him; which plainly enough arose from his seeing the knavish intentions of Edmund to steal his intended wife from him: thirdly, from the fact, that Edmund showed just as much kindness as ever to Sigifred, which, assuredly, he never could have done, unless with the intention to deceive, and cheat him: fourthly, because Sigifred had of late paid fewer and shorter visits to Leofric, and did not look, and talk, so gaily as before; which could only be because he did not feel himself so comfortable, and was afraid of being jilted: fifthly, because Ethelburga still went on with her reading and writing, which never could be of any use to her if she intended to marry an earl's son: sixthly, because Edmund would never take the trou-

ble of teaching her, if he did not hope to marry her himself,—and then to be sure she might help him in his book-learning: seventhly, because she liked him as much, and was with him as much, as ever, when Sigifred was not there; which could only be, because she thought of having him at last, and because she was afraid of vexing, and throwing Sigifred off too soon, and perhaps making him kill Edmund: eighthly, ninthly, and tenthly,—because they could not possibly guess at any thing else, and because both man and woman must find, or make, a cause for every thing.

This subtle developement of hidden motives and causes led farther than had been at first contemplated; for, whereas the primary intention of the argument was simply to prove that Edmund loved Ethelburga, and wished to defraud Sigifred, the last result of it was, that Ethelburga equally loved Edmund, and equally desired to cheat his rival. Now, as most persons are justly indignant at all little knaveries but their own, and, as a roguery like that in question would have involved the additional crime of de-

frauding the whole household of immediate feasts, and presents expected, and also of their fair hope to have, at some time, a rich earl's son, if not an earl himself, for their lord, there arose, immediately on their conviction of this true state of the case, a virtuous anger in the breasts of all the members of Leofric's establishment against the wicked pair: and not only was their dishonesty freely censured in the private conclaves of the household, but was soon made the subject of discussion among wider circles abroad. Nothing of this, however, came to the ears of the two chiefly concerned; although Edmund, and even Ethelburga, could at times perceive a change in the manners of the domestics towards themselves, for which they knew not how to account. Obscure hints, too, were occasionally, but cautiously, thrown out to both, of injury to the family meditated *some how*, and by *some one*;—but the meaning of these was quite enigmatical to them; and their minds were too much pre-occupied to allow long consideration of the caprices or inuendoes of domestics.

In the heart of Oswulf, however, the angry

heat which was feebly diffused through all the rest, appeared to meet as in a burning focus. He it was by whom the fire, that else might have burned out, was unceasingly fed, and blown up. From him came the breath which, as from the wind-chest of an organ, gave voice to the household pipes which otherwise would speedily have become mute. In the alembick of his soul, all the unwholesome weeds of slander, which had sprung up in the marshy places of other bosoms, but which would soon have decayed and left no venom behind, were heaped up, and distilled to a deadly and imperishable poison. Upon all the rest an infected air had breathed, but upon him were the plague spots visible; and from him went continually forth with fresh strength the pestilence that would else have died away. Every malignant whisper from the tongue of another found, in his hollow heart, a thousand echoes. Like a skilful fuguist, he worked up the one short theme of his hatred through every key, and mode, and with every variety of inversion, and distortion. The villainy of the beggar Edmund, who sought to injure the whole family for the

attainment of his own black purposes, was the exhaustless subject of his declamation. To most, his words were wholly unreserved; but, with Leofric and Kentwina, he was compelled to use insinuations, rancorous, but guarded. The love and esteem with which they looked upon Edmund were too well known to him; and the defence which they shewed themselves ever prompt to make against his calumniator taught him that nothing could be expected from actual assault, though it did not deprive him of hope from a slow and continued undermining. That which he feared to say himself, he procured others to insinuate. Bribes, promises, threats of evil to come, were employed upon every one who could in any manner have access to the ears of his parents, to induce them to drop in the "leperous distilment:" and he beheld, at length, with the delight of a tormenting fiend, that the poison began to work. But its progress was too slow, too uncertain: the cold look or tone, directed by Leofric or Kentwina towards Edmund, was too frequently succeeded by a renewed kindness, that seemed to indicate self-reproach for having

inflicted an undeserved pain. Upon Sigifred next the subtle demon tried his arts. By every means that he could compass, he strove to infuse into the bosom of that youth the almost quenchless fire of jealousy; and, for a short time, he thought that he had succeeded. Edmund, however, visited Castle Maximus; and, when Sigifred returned afterwards for a few days with him, Oswulf saw that, whatever other passion might be at work within him, the flame of jealousy was wholly extinguished. Yet blacker thoughts then began to kindle in him. The health, or even the life, of his detested foe, became the object of his attack. To strike his limbs with palsy, or his mind with idiocy, by spell or incantation, he believed to be a possible, nay an easy, safe, and unsuspected revenge. *

* Their pretenders to witchcraft were called *wicca*, *scin-læca*, *galdor-cræftig*, *wiglaer*, and *morthwyrtha*. *Wiglær* is a combination from *wig*, an idol or a temple, and *lær*, learning, and may have been one of the characters of the Anglo-Saxon idolatry. He was the wizzard, as *wicca* was the witch. *Scinlæca* was a species of phantom, or apparition; and was also used as the

Many a secret conference then had he with Galdor-cræftig, Wiglaer, and Morthwyrtha:

name of the person who had the power of producing such things: it is, literally, a shining dead body. *Galdor-cræftig* implies one skilled in incantations; and *morthwyrtha* is, literally, a worshipper of the dead.

Another general appellation for such personages was *dry*, a magician. The clergy opposed these follies in their homilies.*

The laws notice these practices with penal severity. The best account that can be given of them will be found in the passages proscribing them.

"If any *wicca*, or *wiglær*, or false swearer, or *morthwyrtha*, or any foul, contaminated, manifest *horewenan*, (whore quean or strumpet,) be anywhere in the land, men shall drive them out." †

"We teach that every priest shall extinguish all heathendom, and forbid *wilweorthunga* (fountain-worship), and *licwiglunga* (incantations of the dead), and *hwata* (omens), and *galdra* (magic), and man-worship,

* Thus in a homily against auguries it is said, "That the dead should rise through *dry-cræft*, *deofol-gild*, *wicc-cræft*, and *wiglunga*, is very abominable to our Saviour; and they that exercise these crafts are God's enemies, and truly belong to the deceitful devil, with him to dwell for ever in eternal punishment." —*MSS. Bodl. Wanl. Cat.* p. 42.

† *Wilk. Leg. Anglo-Sax.* p. 53.

many a sign did he make, many a death spell did he mutter against the person of his victim;

and the abominations that men exercise in various sorts of witch-craft, and in *frithsplottum*, and with elms and other trees, and with stones, and with many other phantoms." *

From subsequent regulations, we find that these practices were made the instruments of the most fatal mischief; for penitentiary penalties are enjoined if any one should destroy another by *wicce cræfte;* or if any should drive sickness on a man; or if death should follow from the attempt. †

They seem to have used philtres; for it is also made punishable if any should use witchcraft to produce another's love, or should give him to eat or to drink with magic. ‡ They were also forbid to *wiglian* by the moon. § Canute renewed the prohibitions. He enjoined them not to worship the sun or the moon, fire or floods, wells or stones, or any sort of tree; not to love *wicce-cræft*, or frame death-spells, either by lot or by torch; nor to effect any thing by phantoms. ‖ From the Pœnitentiale of Theodore we also learn, that the power of letting loose tempests was also pretended to. ¶

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* *Wilk. Leg. Anglo-Sax.* p. 83. † *Ibid.* p. 93.

‡ *Ibid.* § *MS. Tib.* A. 3. ‖ *Wilkins*, p. 134.

¶ *Spelm. Concil.* 155. They dreaded spectres; and one of their medical recipes is, "If a man suffer from *scinlac*, or spec-

but the hoped for evil did not follow. Once indeed Edmund had a narrow escape; yet not from the phantoms of witchcraft, but from the reality of the poisonous drug. One of the wretched impostors whose spells Oswulf had repeatedly tried, and still in vain, was at last, by mingled menaces and bribes, urged to furnish

Another name for their magical arts was *unlybban wyrce*, literally, destructive of life. The penitence is prescribed for a woman who kills a man by *unlybban*. One instance of their philtres is detailed to us. A woman, resolving on the death of her step-son, or to alienate from him his father's affection, sought a witch, who knew how to change minds by art and enchantments. Addressing such a one with promises and rewards, she inquired how the mind of the father might be turned from the child, and be fixed on herself. The magical medicament was immediately made, and mixed with the husband's meat and drink. The catastrophe of the whole was the murder of the child; and the discovery of the crime by the assistant, to revenge the step-mother's ill-treatment. *—*Turner*, Vol. iii. p. 156.

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tre, let him eat lion's flesh, and he will never suffer from any scinlac again."—*Cott. MSS. Vitell.* C. 3.

* *Gale's Script.* p. 439.

him with a philtre whose nature, as he said, was to cause madness. This the monster with the utmost caution contrived to mingle with the bowl of milk and wheaten bread of which Edmund was about to make his morning meal. But, though he thought himself alone, and secure from detection, he was fortunately beheld and suspected.

Brother Elf, having, upon some business or other, made an early visit to the castle, had felt an inclination, not very unusual with him, to convert the pantry of the thane into a refectory for a monk. Now, brother Elf was a little, thin, pale-faced, man, but he had an appetite that would have made an alderman respected. Sorry indeed should we be to utter aught that might tend to bring a holy man, even of the ninth century, into derision, but the truth must be spoken. For this, and all his other sins, he has, we trust, long before this time, made ample atonement; and his now beatified spirit will not look down with indignation upon the humble scribe whom a love of truth urges to hint tenderly his little peccadilloes. And

here, though perhaps somewhat out of place, we must be allowed to say a few words upon the character of this harmless and unfortunate man. How indeed, if we should restrict ourselves to the mention of the mere fact that a holy and reverend brother of the priory of Cothelstone, commissioned, doubtless, with some pious purpose, had been clandestinely seeking entrance to the pantry of his convent's patron, at the moment when he ought to have been in the solemn performance of his delegated duty, how could we hope to escape the heavy censure of those who know full well that, except under circumstances the most extraordinary, no holy brother, whether of convent or of church, could possibly have so erred? A few words therefore of the foibles peculiar to this reverend man, and palliatory, it may be hoped, of the act which he is going to commit, must be granted to us.

NOTES.

NOTES.

Note A.—Page 1.

The Sea-Kings of the North were a race of beings whom Europe beheld with horror. Without a yard of territorial property, without any towns, or visible nation, with no wealth but their ships, no force but their crews, and no hope but from their swords, the Sea-Kings swarmed upon the boisterous ocean, and plundered in every district they could approach. Never to sleep under a smoky roof, nor to indulge in the cheerful cup over a hearth, were the boasts of these watery sovereigns, who not only flourished in the plunder of the sea and its shores, but who sometimes amassed so much booty, and enlisted so many followers, as to be able to assault provinces for permanent conquest.—*Turner's Anglo-Saxon History* Vol. 1st, p. 456.

Note B.—Page 3.

The Scandinavian mythology expressly distinguishes two different abodes for the happy, and as many for the culpable; which is what several authors who have writ of the ancient religion of Europe, have not sufficiently attended to. The first of these abodes was the palace of Odin named Valhalla, where that god received all such as died in a violent manner, from the beginning to the end of the world, that is, to the time of that universal desolation of nature which was to be followed by a new creation, and what they called Ragnarockur, or the Twilight of the Gods. The second, which after the renovation of all things, was to be their eternal abode, was named Gimle, that is, the Palace covered with Gold, the description of which we have seen above, where the just were to enjoy delights for ever. It was the same as to the place of punishments; they distinguished two of those, of which the first named Niflheim,* was only to continue to the renovation of the world, and the second that succeeded it, was to endure for ever. This last was named Nastrond:† and we have seen in the description of the end of the world what idea was entertained of it

* This word signifies the abode of the wicked, from the island *Nifl*, evil, and *Heim*, home.

† The shore of the dead.

by the ancient Danes. With regard to the two first places, the Valhalla and Niflheim, they are not only distinguished from the others, in being only to endure till the conflagration of the world, but also in that they seem rather intended to reward violence than virtue, and rather to stifle all the social affections than to deter men from crimes. Those only, whose blood had been shed in battle, might aspire to the pleasures which Odin prepared for them in Valhalla. The pleasures which they expected after death, shew us plainly enough what they relished during life. "The heroes" says the Edda,* "who are received into the palace of Odin, have every day the pleasure of arming themselves, of passing in review, of ranging themselves in order of battle, and of cutting one another in pieces, but as soon as the hour of repast approaches, they return on horseback all safe and sound, back to the Hall of Odin, and fall to eating and drinking. Though the number of them cannot be counted, the flesh of the boar Serimner is sufficient for them all; every day it is served up at table, and every day it is renewed again entire: their beverage is beer and mead; one single goat, whose milk is excellent mead, furnishes enough of that liquor to intoxicate all the heroes: their cups are the skulls of enemies they have slain. Odin alone, who sits at a table by himself, drinks wine for his entire liquor. A crowd of virgins

* Edda, *Iceland. Mythol.* 31, 33, 34, 35.

wait upon the heroes at table, and fill their cups as fast as they empty them." Such was that happy state, the bare hope of which rendered all the inhabitants of the North of Europe intrepid, and which made them not only to defy, but even seek with ardour the most cruel deaths. Accordingly, King Regner Lodbrog when he was going to die, far from uttering groans, or forming complaints, expressed his joy by these verses. "We are cut to pieces with swords: but this fills me with joy, when I think of the feast that is preparing for me in Odin's palace. Quickly, quickly seated in the splendid habitation of the Gods, we shall drink beer out of the skulls of our enemies. A brave man fears not to die. I shall utter no timorous words as I enter the Hall of Odin." This fanatic hope derived additional force from the ignominy affixed to every kind of death but such as was of a violent nature, and from the fear of being sent after such an exit into Niflheim. This was a place consisting of nine worlds, reserved for those that died of disease or old age. Hela or Death, there exercised her despotic power; her palace was Anguish; her table Famine; her waiters were Expectation and Delay; the threshold of her door was Precipice; her bed Leanness: she was livid and ghastly pale; and her very looks inspired horror.

After this description of the religion of the Scandinavians, can we be surprized that they should make war their only business, and carry their valour to the utmost

excesses of fanaticism.—*Mallet's Northern Antiquities*, Vol. 1st, p. 100.

Note C.—Page 8.

The organ was in use among the Anglo-Saxons. Cassiodorus and Fortunatus mention the word organ as a musical instrument, but it has been thought to have been a collection of tubes blown into by the human breath. Muratori has contended that the art of making organs like ours was known in the eighth century only to the Greeks; that the first organ in Europe was the one sent to Pepin from Greece in 756, and that it was in 826 that a Venetian priest, who had discovered the secret, brought it into France.* A passage which I have observed in Aldhelm's poem, De Laude Virginum, entirely overthrows these theories; for he, who died in 709, and who never went to Greece, describes them in a manner which shows that he was acquainted with great organs made on the same principle as our own :—

> Maxima millenis auscultans organa flabris
> Mulceat auditum ventosis follibus iste
> Quam libet auratis fulgescant cætera capsis.†

This is literally,

"Listening to the greatest organs with a thousand

* *Murat. de Art. Ital.* ii. p. 357.

† 13 *Max. Bib. Pat.* 3.

blasts, the ear is soothed by the windy bellows, while the rest shines in the gilt chests."

Another evidence of the antiquity of organs among the Anglo-Saxons has occurred to my observation in the works of Bede, a contemporary and survivor of Aldhelm. The passage is express, and also shows how they were made.—

"An organum is a kind of tower made with various pipes, from which, by the blowing of bellows, a most copious sound is issued; and that a becoming modulation may accompany this, it is furnished with certain wooden tongues from the interior part, which, the master's fingers skilfully repressing, produce a grand and also a most sweet melody."*—*Turner's Anglo-Saxon History*, Vol. 3d. p. 491.

Note E.—Page 40.

The Eleventh Fable. Of the God Thor, the Son of Odin.

Hereupon Gangler demanded, What are the names of the other Gods? What are their functions, and what have they done for the advancement of their glory? Har says to him, The most illustrious among them is Thor. He is called *Asa Thor*, or the Lord Thor; and *Ake Thor*, or the Active Thor. He is the strongest and bravest of

* *Bede, Op.* Vol. viii. p. 1062.

gods and men. His kingdom is named *Thrudwanger*. He possesses there a palace, in which are five hundred and forty halls. It is the largest house that is known; according as we find mentioned in the poem of Grimnis. "There are five hundred and forty halls in the winding palace of the God Thor; and I believe there is nowhere a greater fabric, than this of the eldest of sons." The chariot of Thor is drawn by two He-Goats. It is in that chariot that he goes into the country of the giants; and thence they call him the rapid Thor. He likewise possesses three very precious things. The first is a Mace or Club, called *Miolner*, which the giants of the frost, and those of the mountains, know to their cost, when they see it hurled against them in the air: and no wonder; for with that mace has this god often bruised the heads of their fathers and kindred. The second jewel he possesses, is called the belt of prowess; when he puts it on, he becomes as strong again as he was before. The third, which is also very precious, are his gauntlets, or gloves of Iron, which he always wears when he would lay hold of the handle of his Mace.—*Mallet's Northern Antiquities*, Vol. 2d. p. 47.

Note F.—Page 68.

Freya is the most propitious of the goddesses. The place which she inhabits in heaven is called "the union

of the people." She goes on horseback to every place where battles are fought, and asserts her right to one half of the slain; the other half belongs to Odin. Her palace is large and magnificent; thence she sallies forth in the chariot, drawn by two cats. She lends a very favourable ear to the vows of those who sue for her assistance. It is from her that the ladies have received the name, which we give them in our language. She is very much delighted with the songs of lovers; and such as would be happy in their amours ought to worship this goddess.—*Mallet*, Vol. 2d, p. 47. 13th Fable.

Note G.—Page 84.

Their laws for the most part (like those of the ancient Lacedemonians) seemed to know no other virtues than those of a military nature, and no other crimes but cowardice. They inflicted the greatest penalties on such as fled the first in battle. The laws of the ancient Danes, according to Saxo, excluded them from society, and declared them infamous. Among the Germans this was sometimes carried so far as to suffocate cowards in mud; after which, they covered them over with hurdles: to shew, says Tacitus, that though the punishment of crimes should be public, there are certain degrees of cowardice and infamy which ought to be buried in eternal silence.—*Mallet*, Vol. 1st, p. 169.

Note H.—Page 99.

The respect they had for their arms made them also swear by instruments so valuable and so useful, as being the most sacred things they knew. Accordingly, in an ancient Icelandic poem, a Scandinavian, to assure himself of a person's good faith, requires him to swear "by the shoulder of a horse, and the edge of a sword."—*Mallet*, Vol. 1st, p. 184.

Note I.—Page 107.

The Seventeenth Fable. Of the Wolf Fenris.

As to the Wolf Fenris, the Gods bred him up among themselves; Tyr being the only one among them who durst give him his food. Nevertheless, when they perceived that he every day increased prodigiously in size, and that the oracles warned them that he would one day become fatal to them; they determined to make very strong iron fetters for him, and presenting them to the wolf, desired him to put them on to shew his strength, in endeavouring to break them. The monster perceiving that this enterprise would not be very difficult to him, permitted the Gods to do what they pleased: and then violently stretching his nerves, burst the chains, and set himself at liberty. The Gods having seen this, made a new set of iron chains, half as strong again as the former,

and prevailed on the Wolf to put them on, assuring him in breaking these he would give an undeniable proof of his vigour. The wolf saw well enough that these second chains would not be very easy to break; but finding himself increase in strength, and that he could never become famous without running some risk, he voluntarily submitted to be chained. As soon as this was done, he shakes himself, rolls upon the ground, dashes his chains against the earth, violently stretches his limbs, and at last bursts his fetters, which he made to fly in pieces all about him. By these means he freed himself from his chains; and gave rise to the proverb which we still apply, when any one makes strong efforts. After this, the Gods despaired of ever being able to bind the wolf: wherefore the Universal Father sent Skyrner, the messenger of the God Frey, into the country of the black Genii, to a dwarf, to engage him to make a new bandage to confine Fenris.* That bandage was perfectly smooth, and as limber as a common string, and yet very strong, as you will presently see. When it was brought to the Gods they were full of thanks and acknowledgments to the bringers; and taking the wolf with

* Goranson's Edition adds, "This nerve or string was made of six things, viz, of the noise made by cat's feet; of a woman's beard; of the roots of mountains; of the nerves of bears; of the breath of fishes; and the spittle of birds, &c." (with much more.)

them into the isle of a certain lake, they shewed him the string, entreating that he would try to break it, and assuring him that it was somewhat stronger than one would think, on seeing it so slender. They took it themselves, one after another into their hands, attempting in vain to break it; and then told him, that there was none besides himself who could accomplish such an enterprise. The wolf replied, that string which you present to me is so slight, that there will be no glory in breaking it; or if there be any artifice in the manner of its formation, although it appear never so brittle, assure yourselves it shall never touch a foot of mine. The Gods assured him that he would easily break so slight a bandage, since he had already burst asunder shackles of iron of the most solid make; adding, that if he should not succeed, he would then have shown the Gods that he was too feeble to excite their terror, and therefore they should make no difficulty of setting him at liberty without delay. I am very much afraid, replied the monster, that if you once tie me so fast that I cannot work my deliverance myself, you will be in no haste to unloose me. I would not therefore voluntarily permit myself to be tied, but only to show you that I am no coward: yet I insist upon it, that one of you put his hand in my mouth, as a pledge that you intend me no deceit. Then the Gods, wistfully looking on one another, found themselves in a very embarrassing dilemma; till Tyr presented himself, intrepidly offering his right hand

to the monster. Hereupon the Gods having tied up the wolf, he forcibly stretched himself, as he had formerly done, and exerted all his powers to disengage himself: but the more efforts he made, the closer and straiter he drew the knot; and all the Gods (except Tyr, who lost his hand,) burst into loud peals of laughter at the sight. Observing him then so fast tied, as to be unable ever to get loose again, they took one end of the string, and having drilled a hole for it, drew it through the middle of a large broad rock, which they sunk very deep into the earth; afterwards, to make it still more secure, they tied the end of the cord which came through the rock, to a great stone which they sunk still deeper. The wolf, opening wide his tremendous jaws, endeavoured to devour them, and rushed upon them with violence. Which the Gods seeing, thrust a sword into his mouth, which pierced his under jaw up to the hilt, so that the point touched his palate. The howlings which he then made were horrible; and since that time, the foam flows continually from his mouth, in such abundance that it forms a river, called *Vam*, or the Vices. But that monster shall break his chain at the Twilight of the Gods, that is, at the end of the world.—*Mallet*, Vol. 2d, p. 65.

END OF VOLUME FIRST.

EDINBURGH:
PRINTED BY JOHN STARK,
Old Assembly Close.